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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

CHRIST IN HADES:

A Poem.

BY

WILLIAM W. LORD.

Κατέβη εἰς τὸν ᾅδην.
SYMBOLUM ATHANASIANUM.

He descended into Hell.
THE APOSTLES' CREED.

Mortem suscepisse et vicisse, intrasse inferos et redisse, venisse in jura Tartari, et Tartari jura solvisse, non est fragilitas, sed potestas.
PET. CHRYSOLOGUS.

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WILLIAM W. LORD,

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TO

HON. WILLIAM B. KINNEY,

WITH THE

HOPE THAT HIS JUDGMENT WILL APPROVE A WORK

TO WHICH FRIENDSHIP

WILL NOT PERMIT HIM TO BE INDIFFERENT,

This Poem is Inscribed,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

"Of those which did believe the name of Hades to belong unto that general place which comprehended all the souls of men, some of them thought that Christ descended to that place of Hades, where the souls of all the faithful, from the death of the righteous Abel to the death of Christ, were detained, and there, dissolving all the power by which they were detained below, translated them into a far more glorious place, and estated them in a condition far more happy in the heavens above. * * * Another opinion hath obtained, especially in our Church, that the end for which our Saviour descended into hell was to triumph over Satan and all the powers below, within their own dominions. And this hath been received as grounded on the Scriptures and consent of Fathers."—*Pearson on the Creed.*

It was my purpose, in undertaking this work, to give poetic form, design, and history to the descent of Christ into hell; a fact that has for so many ages attracted the curiosity of the human mind, as to furnish occasion for surprise that the

attempt has not hitherto been made. As regards the end for which He descended, I have adhered to the Christian tradition that it was to free the souls of the ancient saints confined in the temporal paradise of the Under-world, embracing also in my design the less general opinion, that it was to demonstrate His universal supremacy by appearing among the damned.

A source of additional human interest was suggested by the relation which men, as a distinct order of beings, might be supposed to sustain to demons in the place of their common doom, and under new conditions of existence; such, I conceived, as would make it possible in some degree to realize even the divine fictions of the Greek mythology, under the forms and with the attributes accorded them by ancient religions, and by the poetry of all time. This could not fail to suggest the further conception of introducing the divinities of our forefathers, and of other great families of mankind, thus bringing together in action and contrast the deified men, or various representatives

of an heroic humanity, among different races: nor did it seem too great a stretch of imaginative probability to conceive that their general characteristics might be adopted and imitated by beings already invested by the human mind with an indefinite power, and inhabiting a world in which the wonderful becomes the probable.

But it is, after all, the general purpose of exhibiting the triumph of moral power over all physical and inferior spiritual force, in the descent of Christ into hell, which gives my design the complex character of a mythic, heroic, and Christian poem, and, at the same time, constitutes the unity of its parts. The ancients, whose representative types I introduce, knew and appreciated but two kinds of power, brute or physical, and spiritual, including all occult and supernatural efficacy, and strength of intellect and will. Virtue, triumphant by the aid of adventitious force, or relying upon unconquerable pride and disdain to resist it, was the highest reach of their dynamic conceptions. Moral power is properly a Christian idea. It is not,

therefore, without what I conceive to be a true as well as a poetic apprehension of the design of the Descent into Hell, that the heroes of profane, and the not fabulous Titans of sacred antiquity, by their rivalries and contentions, brought together in arms for a trial of their comparative strength, are suddenly confronted with a common and dissimilar antagonist, and "all strength, all terror, single or in bands, that ever was put forth" opposed to that novel, and, save in the Temptation, hitherto untested power, represented by Christ, the author of the theory and master of the example.

He is not supposed to appear among them "grasping in his hand ten thousand thunders," but endued with an equal power, the result and expression of perfect virtue and rightful authority. His triumph is attributed neither to natural, nor to supernatural power; but to moral superiority, evincing itself in His aspect, and exercising its omnipotence upon the soul and conscience. That in the conception of a great Christian poet, His appearance among the rebel angels in heaven was

distinguished by the former attributes, is due, perhaps, to the heroic prejudice of a mind thoroughly imbued with the spirit of pagan writers, and of the Hebrew Scriptures.

As to invention and art, if a poem does not commend itself by the interest it excites, the author, except in writing it, could not worse bestow his tediousness than in its defence and exposition. I may be permitted to say, however, that while a conviction that the character of my own performance must necessarily bring it into comparison with greater works, could not deter me from undertaking what seemed of sufficient promise to justify some degree of daring, I am well aware that, compared with these, it is but a symphony to a strain—an urn to a temple; and as such let it be judged. The reverence for great poets which, after them, would give no hearing to one using what we may call, for convenience' sake, the Christian mythology, is a prejudice as fatal to creative art, and as certainly tending to the poverty of letters, as would have been a simi-

lar notion among the Greeks and Romans with respect to the mythology to which Homer in like manner, and to a still greater degree, gave form and expression. The question in such cases is not whether the later poet uses associations established in the minds of men by earlier poets,—if it were, even Milton, and perhaps Homer, would stand convicted of obligation to greater inventive genius,—but whether he combines, for an original purpose, newly discovered with existing materials; whether the impression produced is that of invention and novelty;—not whether he originated the entire mass of materials, some of which, at least, are, with all writers who endure the test of time, as old as history and nature:—in a word, it is whether character and incident are taken from existing works, or are the result of new combinations, which flow naturally from an original design, working itself out in intelligible poetic forms.

Eastridge, Dec. 8, 1850.

ARGUMENT.

BOOK I.

Discovers Satan seated in despair among the infernal powers, upon his return to hell after his defeat in the Temptation of Christ.

Baal, an angel and one of the ethnic deities, rising in his place among the dejected fiends, denounces Satan; accusing him of imbecility, on account of his defeat in his recent trial of the divine pretensions of Christ, and the despair into which he is thrown by his failure. He advises that some other take the throne,—which Satan, not ascending, seems voluntarily to have abdicated, as the former intimates, in view of the predicted descent of his Victor into that world. He complains that they have been disappointed in their hopes of relief from the pains of their present condition through the agency of Satan, and inveighs against the human race in hell, and their elevation by Satan to equal dignity and power.

Astarte, a female angel and one of the Sidonian divinities,

replies ; accusing Baal of disloyalty to his natural sovereign, and defending Satan from his imputations. She is followed by Cain, who, as the oldest of his race in hell, and as their natural head, has been elevated by Satan to the place next himself. He retorts the taunts of Baal, on behalf of himself and his kind, defies and denounces him and his faction. In consequence, the human and the angelic powers separate, and draw off under their respective leaders, leaving Satan, where the opening of the book discovers him, buried in apathy and despair.

BOOK II.

The inferior paradise and its inhabitants described.

Abel narrates to Adam and the Saints a vision, in which the death of his Antitype, Christ, is revealed, and its relation to them, and to mankind in general, indicated. At the conclusion of the narration, the Saints break forth into a hymn, in which they adore the Word in His threefold aspect of Creator, Enlightener, and Redeemer of the world, and implore His immediate presence and revelation among them, in their world of banishment and privation—banishment from Him, and privation of His light. Christ descends. The meeting of Christ with Adam, and His reception by the Saints.

BOOK III.

In the infernal Hades the human and the angelic powers meet in the field to test their comparative strength, and decide

the dominion of hell. The conflict, yet undecided, is terminated, through divine interference, by a tempest that overwhelms both.

BOOK IV.

Christ in Paradise declares to the Saints the purpose of His descent; explains why it has been so long delayed; announces His intention of passing over into the Tartarean Hades; and informs them of what is there performing, viz., the convening, through their contentions and rivalries, of the infernal powers, by their own act, but in the divine intention, in anticipation of His appearance among them.

BOOK V.

In Tartarus the angelic forces, withdrawn from the field, take counsel how to retrieve the disaster suffered in their first conflict with the human powers. Baal accuses the tyranny of fate, and advises another trial of their fortune, but unavailingly. Asmod rises and refutes the doctrine of fate, and denies that their defeat is to be attributed to its influence—concedes the equal power of the human spirits, and advises a secret and sudden assault; which they prepare to put in execution.

The human powers, convened upon similar occasion, are addressed by Cecrops: he congratulates them upon their partial success, but argues the necessity of strengthening themselves by alliance with all the races in hell of a common origin—intimates that the Titans, conceived to be the Antediluvian or Archaic

race of men, and also the Asar, the Northern heroes and deified men, or those who enacted their parts, should be sought in the several and distinct regions of hell which they chose to inhabit, and their alliance and aid solicited. They approve the project, and send ambassadors to the Titans and the Asar.

BOOK VI.

The Ambassador to the Asar, after a difficult access to the region, enters the imitated Valhalla. His reception by the Asar.

The Ambassador to the Titans discovers and addresses them. His reception by them ; their rising.

BOOK VII.

The Asar, seized with the Berserker fury (see note 2, Book VI.) at the sight of armed strangers, fall upon them to whose aid they had been summoned. While the Northern powers are thus engaged in contest with their kind, the angelic enemy make their attack from the air.

At a sound, supposed by them to be a manifestation of the divine power for their overthrow as in the former conflict, the angelic host retire. The Titans approach. The meeting of the Titans and the later races of mankind. The angelic powers return and renew the assault, and the whole human race in hell become engaged with them in a general conflict.

BOOK VIII.

A light appears on the side of hell next paradise, and Christ, followed by the unarmed host of saints, approaches the embattled fiends and infernal powers. Terror-struck, they retreat for aid to Satan (who has hitherto remained, as the First Book describes him, seated apart, and indifferent to what was passing in his domain). Satan rises and advances to meet Christ. Their meeting. The triumph of Christ, and His ascent from Hades with the Saints.

INVOCATION.

Thou of the darkness and the fire, and fame
Avenged by misery and the Orphic doom,
Bard of the tyrant-lay! whom dreadless wrongs,
Impatient, and pale thirst for justice drove,
A visionary exile, from the earth,
To seek it in its iron reign—O stern!
And not accepting sympathy, accept
A not presumptuous offering, that joins
That region with a greater name: And thou,
Of my own native language, O dread bard!
Who, amid heaven's unshadowed light, by thee
Supremely sung, abidest—shouldst thou know
Who on the earth with thoughts of thee erects
And purifies his mind, and, but by thee,

Awed by no fame, boldened by thee, and awed—
Not with thy breadth of wing, yet with the power
To breathe the region air—attempts the height
Where never Scio's singing eagle towered,
Nor that high-soaring Theban moulted plume,
Hear thou my song! hear, or be deaf, who may.
And if not rashly, or too soon, I heed
The impulse, but have waited on my heart
With patience, and its utterance stilled with awe
Of what inspired it, till I felt it beat
True cadence to unconquerable strains;
Oh, then may she first wooed from heaven by prayer
From thy pure lips, and sympathy austere
With suffering, and the sight of solemn age,
And thy gray Homer's head, with darkness bound,
To me descend, more near, as I am far
Beneath thee, and more need her aiding wing.
Oh, not again invoked in vain, descend,
Urania! and eyes with common light
More blinded than were his by Heaven's hand
Imposed to intercept distracting rays,
Bathe in the vision of transcendent day;
And of the human senses (the dark veil

Before the world of spirit drawn) remove
The dim material hindrance, and illume;
That human thought again may dare behold
The shape and port of spirits, and once more
Hear voices in that distant, shadowy world,
To which ourselves, and this, are shadows, they
The substance, immaterial essence pure—
Souls that have freed their slave, and given back
Its force unto the elements, the dread
Manes, or the more dread Archetypes of men:
Like whom in featured reason's shape—like whom
Created in the mould of God—they fell,
And, mixed with them in common ruin, made
One vast and many-realmèd world, and shared
Their deep abodes—their endless exile, some,—
Some to return to the ethereous light
When one of human form, a Saviour-Man
Almighty, not in deity alone,
But mightier than all angels in the might
And guard of human innocence preserved,
Should freely enter their dark empire—these
To loose, o'er those to triumph; this the theme,
The adventure, and the triumph of my song.

BOOK I.

BOOK I.

Came on the starless age of the uncheered
Dark night, that in the shadow of the earth
Hid the dead Saviour of the world, and gleamed
Upon the warrior-watched and virgin tomb
Which held the mortal of that man foredoomed
To visit the deep region of the dead,
And thence to reascend both earth and heaven,
The first pale day; and more mean-time the gloom
Deepened in hell—where, motionless, reclined
The sad immortals, chief among the powers
Of earth and air, giants and fallen gods,
And looked upon each other without word.
Nor might the grief that bowed supremest shapes,
Nor the dumb trouble in their eyes, find voice

While he before them sat who with a word
Had made them voiceless, and spake not again,
And looked not up, since when his looked despair
Had darkened hell, and like a black eclipse
Covered the hope that was its only day.
Half to his throne ascended, on the steep
Sole-touched by his proud feet, as if dethroned
By his own act, and into ruin fallen
Self-hurled, sat Aïdoneus,[1] discrowned,
With foot upon a broken sceptre set,
And head stooped forward to his hands, and seemed,
But for the rising and the slow decline
Of his wide-lifting shoulders, like one dead.
And dread his aspect, even to their eyes
Used to all sights of grandeur and despair,
All tragic posture and the pomp of woe;
Not only for his immemorial state
Abandoned, and the rightful awe that still
Sat on his unkinged head and vacant hand,
But him most capable of grief they deemed
Whose strength was greatest to endure or dare,
And deepest his despair whose hope was first.
So there before him, each upon his throne,

Sat as if throne and shape were but one stone;
And, for that space, more like their idols seemed
In regions orient, sitting, hushed and dark,
Within a woody cloister of close palms,
Or, old with lifeless years, in some forgot,
Rare-pilgrimed temple, or dim cavern, ranged,—
Unseen by all the stars. At length to break
The latent chain that bound the force of limb
And faculty in each fierce spirit, rose
Barbarian Baal; in his depth of shade,
Save by their gloomy and familiar eyes,
Not from the dark discerned; in shape conjoined
Angel and brute, in temper brute, but strong,
And third from Satan; whom with unfixed glance,
Under low-dropped and sternly neighboring brows,
He now regarded, as a frenzied beast
On his still dreaded master rolls his fierce,
Inconstant orbs. Him, ages now, unfed
With blood of slaughtered bulls and fragrant smoke,
Sharp hunger seized, and lion-pangs, to taste
Again such offerings, and repossess
The dark and secret land, whence fled of late
His desperate chief; not now from the armed voice

Of his great plaintiff, summoning its bands
Of vassal evils; not from thunder piled
On the crushed air, and titan-lightnings hurled
From his black solitary heaven, high
Above all reach; but from his far-stretched hand
Disguised as human, and the all-pure force
Of virtue, clad in human voice and shape.
Thus hindered of that hope, and chafed, and what
Was godlike in him fired with shame, to think
How one by one the ethnic gods had fallen,
Disarmed, before the constant powers of heaven,
Met in the battle-region of the earth—
How many forced by slight antagonists,
Of puny frame and seeming, from their old
Usurped domain,—himself, on Carmel's top
Amid his howling prophets, by a man,
Defeated, and their prowest, in the wide
And wild arena where he met the last
And wondrous apparition marked with signs
Of Heaven and hostile purpose;—by such scorns
Panged and enraged, and long made pale with hate
Of gods terrestrial-born, but equal made
With the celestial, and to like domain

By Satan raised—the mighty bulk stood up,
Strong but irresolute, and sought to throw
The weight of that stern presence from his soul,
And from its ward unlock imprisoned sound.
But scarce they heard the first hoarse breath, that died
Ere his dumb lips had shaped it to a word
Of any import, when throughout the throng
They stirred, and grasped their arms, as if some ill,
Long pondered and expected, from the heights
Of ether suddenly had fallen; he,
Around and upward, looked with listening stare;
Then, like a cloud arming in heaven, grew
More black and dreadful, and his giant peers,
With copied brow, frowned back dread sympathy,
Published revolt and general discontent:
Yet unprepared they heard, when words like these,
Forth poured like shaped, articulate thunder, shook
The wide Infern, that from its shadowy sides,
Of deepest region, ruined back the sound,
As when one shouts within a hollow cave.
"Abjects—once gods! befits it now that he,
Sole cause of this despair, and for whose sake
We suffer, that his pride may play at Jove,[2]

God of this subterraneous world—with us,
His toys, for subjects—should here sit infirm,
Like his Memnonian image, blind and deaf
To evils that can add to grief that seemed,
Ere this, at greatest, and where all was lost
Bring ruin, and make woe in hell? 'Tis fit,
And time, methinks some monarch should ascend
The abdicated throne, which he perchance
Leaves to his recent victor, hitherward
Pursuing him, with unfamiliar feet
In the blind access hindered, if aright
The babbling lips of oracle have told
Of such a one's descent to these abodes."

He paused, checked by no voice, by none assured:
As when a ship, that on the world's great sides
Climbs the wave-ribbed Pacific, 'gainst the weight
Of tempests from the skiey Andes pressed
Upon the barriered continent of air,
Resistless back, and leaning on the sea,
Is hit by thunder, and intestine fire
Breaks forth, and lights the inexorable face
Of her wild doom; the stark, bewildered crew
Give her to wind and sea, and as she swings,

Helmless, from wave to wave, with crashing spars,
Sit idle,—so sat these who manned the torn
And struggling wreck of heaven, in this abyss
Storm-tossed; so startled, yet infirmly sad
With such surmises as could make gods pale:—
When Satan reared his head, on which no crown
Might plainer have writ king, nor horrent plumes
Shadowed more terror: His immane right hand,
Armed with a gesture of supreme command,
Rose with deific grace to herald speech,
Then, from changed purpose or disdain of words,
Convulsively reached forth, and, as it seemed,
Grasped at the shade of an imagined power
To wield the elemental arms that hung
Gleaming and tremulous in the storm-lit air;
And muttered thunder bayed the ear: At once
A thousand hands upon the broad defence
Tightened their grasp, and half uprose the throng,
Or in their places stirred with ringing sound,
Like the faint threat of war: But Baal, prompt
To seize the imperial moment that controls
The after time, though not without some sign
Of effort in his mien, wrenched forth these words.

"Think not, twice-conquered, from thy sovran place
To awe us with a look, who see crowned Fate
Frown from a greater height on thee and us—
Thee quelled—and us, who far above all fear
Raised, as below all hope dejected, dare
The eternal Tyrant: the malignant star
Of thy dominion rose before our eyes,
Within our own horizon rose, and burned,
And fell toward the darkness, and, like thee,
A creature of the finite time—finds here
Its temporal limit and for ever sets.
Thy strength we know is great, but equals not
The combined strength it governs, the great force
And title of so many worshipped gods;
Which, if it be that might is proof of right,
May rightly govern thee, and henceforth shall.
No answer Heaven's great traverser returned
To these bold taunts, though loud, he marked them not,
Nor heard; as showed his sinking head and arm,
And all his gestureless bowed form, collapsed,
As from a blow by an invisible hand.
And the infernal tribune poured amain
His turbulent speech, with words that swept like storms

Across the souls, celestial still, though fallen,
Of those high-thoughted gloomy deities;—
Words of just right and freedom, tyranny
And usurpation, lore their king himself
And tyrant taught them, when of old it served
'Gainst the All-Ruler: Nor did he forget,
But with the music of some sadness now
In his harsh tones, subdued, and smoothed, to speak
Of hoped deliverance, and the Babel-dreams
With which high-building fancy whiled their pain,
As of things real, merged in this despair,
And whelmed in this last ruin whose full wave
Broke high above them; and with wilful grief,
Over their drowned magnificence his soul
Still wandered and lamented, as the sea
Wails through a city sunk with all its towers.

Nor spared his insolence the highest names
To whom heroic deeds had given praise
Among earth's deities, and so place in hell;
Or those for fortitude as high advanced
By its great regent; Cain and Nimrod first,
Alcides, Theseus, Orion, blind
Bellerophontes, and the names, long since

Dead to the human ear, of Anakim,
Titan, and Demigod, the infant words
Of fame, forgotten in her age, but here
Retained, and honored as became the great
And first-born offspring of the virgin earth,
The giant nurslings of her mighty youth.
"Easy for you," he said, with voice and look
As when the aerial storm-maned lion roars
Against the earth, and glares upon the doomed,—
"Easy for you to king and lord it here,
High-seated 'mid the tyrannies of hell,
Who know no greater state, nor ever felt
Contrast of hell and heaven, nor proved his might
Whose lightning strikes high tops, but such as ye
Leaves safe in weakness, fable what they may
Of wars on Jove. No dizzy height ye fell,
From climbed Olympus or towered Babel hurled,
Here in these depths to find far higher place
Than, though presumptuous, your low thoughts aspired
Above the cloud-spread air; whose blackness scared,
And casual fire—not frighted Jove—deterred
Wingless invaders, heavenward, step by step,
Ascending; know, proud reptiles, mated ill

With children of the air, that from this hour
We recognize no monarch but our fate,—
No peers but are our equals, thus at first
Created, or approved by might." He ceased,
And his defiant foot and planted spear
Brought up an echo from the heart of hell.
Astarte, then, whose anger, scarce restrained
To hear these words from her Sidonian mate,
Burned like the glow of fire through binding smoke,
Blazed upward suddenly, and all her moons
And deep tiaras of stars flashed rosy ire,
Virgin disdain tempered with grief divine.
Like her own planet rising in the east,
So large and fair the beauteous giant stood,
To them who gazed, more lovely for her wrath.
To none was she unknown, to angels there
A woman-angel, from her faith seduced
By bright Abaddon, and to them of earth
Regent of moonèd skies; but in the west(3)
The elect infernal queen, to whom far-strayed
In Nysa's flowery field, from out the earth,
Naked and grisly, came the king of night,
And shamed the modest day of her fair eyes,

And chased the clear Aurora from her cheeks,
Displaced with evening red, and dewy tears.
And thus she spake, with voice as when at night
One hears afar the instant birth of sound
In brazen tubes melodious, mixed with touch
Of stringèd sympathies, that with their tide
Of human feeling fill the hollow air,
Up to the dreaming moon, that stoops to hear.
"More than defeat, oh worse than this despair!
Oh shame, twice shamed with worse defeat, that thou,
An ancient god, his fated feodary,
Who knew him in his greatness, when we all
Could not perceive in what he seemed, who took
The star-bright name of Lucifer, less great
Than stern Jehovah, or in what his state
Shone less magnificent,—that one who sat
High-throned beneath his feet, supremely placed,
And him adored, his creature, he thy God,
His pliant hand, his foot, his smile, his frown,
His friend, and favorite, till ruin came
Like night upon his radiance, and he fell—
A falling sun that after him drew down,
What could he less? his firmament of stars,

And left mid-heaven dark an equal space,
Here in this cavern with his troubled light
To glorify perdition ; oh worse fall,
And death to our divinity !—that they
Should faithful stand who only know him fallen,
And thou shouldst be the first, while thus he sits,
His soul striving its death, to launch these shafts,
Making the wounds trenched by the bolts of Heaven
The mark of thy more dire though feeble aim.
What did I hear thee urge, deedless declaimer,
Against his faith and conduct, from the hopes
Fallen in his defeat ? Who gave us hope
Whereon to build these hopes that we lament ?
Who gave us from this den unhoped reprieve ?
Gave yonder flowery world and sapphire sky
In the celestial ether, and, to soothe
This pain, gifts, incense, ritual dance and song,
With clashing cymbals jubilant, awed looks
And smiles and supplicating tears ? Who raised
Our prostrate deity, in this abyss
Half-buried in its ruins, where it lay
Spurned by the brute and unintelligent
Wild powers of nature, storm, and flaming fire,

And loud, insulting thunder,—its whole force,
And almost life, extinguished, and its light
Nigh trodden out by darkness,—who restored,
Reared, and enthroned it on the heart of man?
And thou, who gave thee thy high-altared hills
And woody temples? whose pale rites my soul
Not more abhorred, above the cedarn tops
Of Syria gliding nightly, than to hear
These blasphemies that more pollute thy lips.
And what though from green fields and azure air,
In that fair heaven of our exile, sent;
Thou for thy vulturous thirst indeed long since,
And we by this defeat? What can be said
But that our enemy, and his, is God,
The eternal elder of all spirits, sire
Of all control and power, over all
High head omnipotent; with whom he now
Strives inwardly, and not with such as thou,
Nor thy reproaches feels, nor hears these words
I speak in his defence, who little thought
He ever would need word from any tongue!"

Thus spake the queen of night, nor deigned to know
If well or ill regarded were her words;

But as when Judah's daughters mourned defeat
And desolation from the foe, she shook
The cloud of her dark tresses to her feet,
And sat beneath them, like a veil; dark, vast,
And stone-like motionless, like the great shape
Of their despair and grief before them set,
By the wan star above her stooping head
Silvered with light. Then high-placed Cain stood up,
A king in semblance, but whose head superb,
Gray with the downfall of afflicting years,
Suborned no greatness of its golden tire;
Nor among kings less than the first might seem,
Nor less than equal among angels stood
Hell's human premier, pale and sternly fair,
Of arch-angelic stature, like a god.
For spirit freed from bodily restraint,
Forced circumscription, if in essence great,
Of its true greatness then puts on the form:
If feeble and irresolute, though of bulk
Typhöean, adequate shape assumes,
Lopped of its huge proportions: And thus spake
The Homicide, whose hand first gave to death
The taste of blood; the lion of that pit

Where fallen he lay, unhumbled fierce and loud,
The first and eldest of his race in hell,
And by its older spirits, though heaven-born,
Feared for a youth accursed above their age.

"Princes, since I, it seems, must prove my right
To call you peers, I stand not here to speak
In his defence who needs none, and whose soul
Would deem such words dishonor, did he hear.
But this I say, that of necessity
Ye fell with him, who fell; his satellites;
Who, had ye then been left, as now ye would,
In that metropolis of all worlds, (by me
Unseen and undesired,) without your head,
Had fallen to ruins, and been darker left
In heaven, deprived his light, than in deep hell.
Fatal dependency, and if unjust,
Let Fate be blamed, not him: But I, who stood
Probationary heir to those bright seats
Whence ye were hurled, I, of free will, joined cause
With you against your tyrant, and alone
Among you came, not with these scoffings hailed,
The first ally of your new founded state;
Nor heard their omen in the infinite cry

That killed the silence when your monarch gave
To this red hand, with that permissive shout,
Hell's second sceptre, as by natural right
King of the new-confederated race."

Thus far, he spake with low but rising sound,
As when, uprousing in his shadowy lair,
The storm-hound of the north begins to bay,—
Thenceforth,—as when into the sky he pours
From his distended breast prolonged stern tones,
And, leaping forth, breaks through the crashing pines
With one wide roar, that swallows up the air.

"Baal, thy airy vaunt of ancient state,
That overtops our new-raised deity,
Must be perforce the scorn of him who deems
Lost honors a disgrace, and sees not yet
What glory comes of station forfeited,
And while retained, ingloriously held
By sufferance, not by might: Not to be great,
Hear it ye pining factions twice the slaves
Of Him ye hate, slaves of his power—and pride,
And Thou, great egotist of heaven, pleased
With fair-shaped breath of muses that accord
Praise to demands for praise—not to be great

I deem it, in the summits of the world
To sit with worshippers in loud-hymned state,
Pomp blazing back on pomp, and voice to voice,
In swelled antiphony and chorus bland,
Returning echo up the wearied air:
Nor is it from an armèd hand of cloud
To cast the thunder-darkness that dismays
Affronting men, nor to their dreadful aim
To guide the whirlwinds that upkindle here
These black and smoke-enveloped lakes to flame:
This to be strong and greatly cruel—that
Is to be weakly glorious;—to be great,
Lies in the soul that on itself retires
For strength; this, serviles! I deem great,
Not to possess, but to contend with force;
By strength of will to dispossess our Hate
Of his chance sovereignty, who, spite his boast,
Is not almighty while the will defies,
And heart dethrones him. Be it yours to wage,
Who know no victory but success in arms
Or treachery, base quarrel with your chief:
I will assume the war; this arm shall lead
The earth's divinities, when Fate permits,

'Gainst your victorious kindred of the air,
By you more dreaded than ere you by men;—
But first, untimely scoffer, mean to prove
That other stroke than Michael's can smite down
Thy vain pretensions, who, with all thy host,
In second rout, hurled down these yawning gulfs
May find a greater depth than hell from heaven."

He ceased, and with a sound as of the sea,
When some fierce wind that in the tropic sky
Hung black and dreadful, from its continent loosed,
Roars down upon the flood, the throng uprose;
And sea-like swayed unto its outmost verge
His audience, as the stormy impulse rolled
Onward, beyond his ken, its helmèd waves,
Up thundering far and wide, with crash of arms,
And spray of flashing spears, and plumy foam.
And far beyond his voice, as, where the wind
As yet fills not the air, wave urges wave—
Thousands on thousands rose in glimmering ranks,
Apparent through the gloom: At once, the broad
And rival standards of the earth and heaven,
This azure and that emerald, unfurled,
And opening, shadowed battle on the air,

Filled with armorial horrors, as beneath
Stood the deep space replete with armèd shape;
Then, soon, diverse, like clouds athwart the sky
Diversely driven, moved to form the war:
Whose dawn in their display the hosts beheld,
And, as when swift Achilles cleft the power
Of Ilion betwixt Xanthus and the gate,
They parted; these with Baal to the south,
Those north with Cain: But Satan where he sat
Like a huge tower half sunk upon its height,
Rose not, nor stirred, and starred Astarte there
Sat motionless before him in her light.

BOOK II.

BOOK II.

In the same world, of demons and damned men
The endless-fixed abode, the same deep world
Of pale, unbreathing realms, but in a clime
Where horror became awe, and darkness shade,
Lay Paradise ;[1] divided from the dark
And punished region by a gulf, so wide
That scarce a level arrow, launched across
By stronger than a mortal archer's arm,
Would plumb the centre ; and so deep, the thought,
Though swift and patient, that should track its flight,
Must deem the abysm's bed had stayed at last
The fast descending arrow—falling still.
And here, as on the gulf's Tartarean shore,
Of wild and abrupt aspect was the soil,

Shaped by creation's storm, and unadorned
By the six artist days of after calm;
But full of wilful grandeur, and rich gleams
In rocks of carbuncle and all ores, and like
The floor of heaven in rough gold unwrought,
And idle wealth; and for a living realm,
In this bright desert set, as in the sun,
And like a dim and vast oasis, stood
The Paradise of God; of earthly saints,
Born ere their Saviour,—till that Saviour's arm
Should break its shadowy door and make them free,—
The sad Elysium.[2] Still the place as sleep,
And as dreams—beautiful; along the plains,
Swept by no wind and withered by no star,
With fixed, wan shadow, stirless aspens stood,
Dark myrtles, and gaunt poplars still and pale,
With cypress mixed: and many a frowning brow
And melancholy look in crag and steep,
Was smoothed by climbing vines and flowery weeds
That built themselves on high, with all their gay
Thick-tangled blooms, and on the barren rock
Hung odors; soft and subtle next to heaven
The clime, and, fit for spiritual breathing, pure:

Nor did it want some glimmerings like day,
But oh! how different from the dewy clear
Of open heaven; nor could it want, if fair,
The mirror, that by hand-clasped mountains raised,
Or set in emerald vales, earth's sceneries hold
To their own beauties; from the hills around,
Browed with black firs and cedars, with thick boughs,
That mingled with the darkness cast from peaks
O'er peaks uprising in the skyless air,
A thousand sinuous or precipitous streams
Lapsed with dim-heard decadence, and from sight
Fled, in devouring clefts, or slept in pools,
That deep within their bosom, held a dream
Of rocks and falling streams and prospects still.
Nor did the place adornment lack from art
Of towers and temples, that a rugged clime,
Of hilly aspects, best befits for show.
For the pale meditative shades that here
Waited release to heaven, had not forgot
The beautifying skill of men, nor lost
The nature that impels them to indue
The nobler moods and unessential forms
Of spirit with material ornament

And visible being,—giving thus to sense,
And so by sensuous reflection to itself,
The pure immortal part. And hence as where
A stranger, in the opening flower of day,
Approaching far Ægina on the sea,
Or Corinth o'er the isthmus, sees in air
The snowy edifice of temples old,
That sleep upon the hills, like clouds of Jove,
And paint the fronted sky, but which the sun
Dispels not, to his wonder,—here the hills
At every spot of vantage, bore on high
Fanes with white statues set in shining frieze
And spacious pediment: such shapes as seemed,—
So airy light they stood, or large reclined,—
As they had down descended on the vast
Columnar pedestal, rising from beneath
To meet and give fit resting-place to gods:
And, though but human, not less grand the groups
That all the famed heroic story told
Of Jephtha and of Sampson, regal Saul,
And David, sweeter Orpheus than harped
At hell's deep portals, with prolonged, wild sound,
Down the abysses wailing on the ear

Of the infernal Fate; but this, inspired,
Sang at the gates of heaven, and his strain
Bade the eternal doors of glory move.
Upon a height by that dividing gulf
Once measured by the eye of Dives, fixed
On the cool extreme,—to the abhorred abyss
More near than the blest people used to roam,
Sat Adam, doomed; sad penance self-imposed,
His offspring to behold, who fell from earth,
Struck with mortality for his sake, like leaves
Cut by the noiseless frost from some full tree,
In yellow autumn. None escaped his sight,
Of them, who from the region of the day
Alighting, brightened the Elysian peaks,
Or those, more numerous, who, along the brink
That shored eternal night, discerned, afar,
Like dusky shadows driven athwart the clear,
Into the darkness fell, unnoised how deep.
This without grief his nature might not bear,
Though nerved to patience by the strength sublime
Which he who views his crime with steadfast eye,
Finds in the stern regard. What could he seem,
Although but shade by grief more dimmed with shade,

But sire and head of an immortal line?
And now there was a splendor in his look,
And conscious strength in his large-limbed repose,
As in a man whom destiny inspires
To assume in soul the greatness which her hands
Invisibly prepare; or as they feign
Of the swart Brahmin, who beneath the sun
Sits without time or change, till death thinks scorn
To touch his withered life,—his penance done,
His eyes grow terrible with light, his limbs
Put on their youth, and his impatient feet
Already feel the steps of Indra's throne.
Eve on his right hand sat, with head declined,
From recollected shame, or weaker mind
Than to endure, with Adam, sight more sad
Than haunts the wide and ever frighted eyes
Of Niobe, for tears compassioned into stone;
And opposite reclined his second born,
First wept, and Moses at his feet, with fixed
Unalterable brow and eye severe;
And in his hands the tables of the law.
These solitary sat, and lower stood
Gray seers, and warriors, in old times revered.

For here came not the general crowd, though free,
Familiarly, nor lightly dared obtrude,
Nor but with awe approach the unborn man.
But now intenser awe pervaded all,
For Adam's voice upon their wonder fell,
With shadowy, but so vast and solemn sound,
That silence not displaced but deeper seemed
In the deep listening of the dead around—
As thus the Sire to Abel—"Whence, oh son,
Was that sad look, the unforgotten sight
Of death, in thee first given to my eyes,
Again upon thy face, and in thy limbs,
But chased by smiles more bright than that was dark,
And such a glory in thine eyes and brow
That scarce I knew thee? So on earth the sun,
When first I saw him darkened by a cloud,
And thought him gone for ever,—like some grand,
High fronted, glorious angel sometimes seen
In-looking on our bower, then seen no more,—
Bursting again imprisoning cold or dark,
Rolled from his vapory cave, like noon on night."
"Adam and Sire," the favorite replied,
"Unconsciously thy speech has touched the cause:

For to my eyes methought the sun appeared,
As often to my thoughts, a golden round,
That turned too soon its darker side to earth;
Or by the intervention of a shade
Stood ruined of its splendor: as it seemed
To my last-looking glance when sudden death
Fell on these darkened eyes, and like a blow
Bore me to earth, unstayed by foot or hand.
Nay, Adam, thou and Eve,—why does that look
Still haunt your downcast eyes at words like these,
As if I only of my kind had died?
And soon a flight of angels I descried,
Together driving, in that dim eclipse,
From the four sides of heaven, so thick as yet
Came never, in an orb of cloudy wings,
Hitherward wafting the insphered souls of saints.
And that way looking whither they all held
Their mid-air voyage, I perceived at length
Why utmost heaven, through its golden ports,
Emptied itself of glory, and its state
Dissolved; while powers pre-eminent, confused
With meaner angels, filled the inferior sphere.
For Him, oh Adam! who on earth oft came

As from no higher power, and spake mild words
But awful, which we spake not and yet knew;—
Him I beheld, uplifted in the air,
Upon a bleeding tree that struck no root
Into the earth, but by the evil hands
Seemed fixed, which on a branch transverse had stretched
Him bound and naked, who still seemed, though worn,
By mortal-haunting sorrow and great pain,
To the gaunt spectacle and hue of death,
The same we called Jehovah, and no less—
To me a wonder—than Almighty God.
And, as I looked, it lifted up its head
And cried, so loud as never thou and Eve
Made lamentation erst in Gihon's vale,
On the returning day of sin and doom.
And darkness fell upon me with the sound,
And mortal fear.—But when unclosed my eyes,
To utter dark near wounded by that sight,
With orb restored, the like affronted sun
Stood large and glorious; and methought I knew
Havilah's cedarn shade, but dreamy dark
It fell around; and on an altar near
A lamb sent up its snowy wreath to heaven."

Here stood awhile the stream of strange discourse:
But none with stir or speech the wonder loosed,
Mute in all tongues and fixed in all their eyes;
But wider browed, intelligent, and intent
Beyond all picture, in the aspect old
Of bards and prophets and the mighty shades
Contemplative, that sat before the mount,
Themselves like hills unmoved. But now their heads,
Each head marked regal by the silver crown
Of millenary years, great Elders leaned
Involuntary forward, and their harps
Touched with preludings to intended song;
As when a breeze breaks from its crystal cave
In the all-tranquil air, and at deep noon
Sweeps through a grove on momentary wings.

But soon the silent seer from revery raised
His eyes, re-lumined with the vision's close,
Most difficult in memory for thought
To unperplex; where wake begins with sleep
To mingle rays, as oft the sun and moon
Shine in the uncertain dawn: and thus resumed.

"Then in the sun where, beamless, in the air
With sacrificial vapor filled, it stood,

I of a human shape became aware,
That me more glorious seemed; my bright
Celestial counterpart; that nearer came
Until the sun its circle wide enlarged
Around us both, and me invested fair,
Within its rosy atmosphere, with bloom
And splendor like the other, more and more
Transfiguring to his brightness all of earth
And gloom that lingered with me, till—too near
Or bright—I lost the image, and awaked
Here in this dusky light to see you sit
Familiar as before, with sunless looks."

Here ceased, but not in silence ended, that
Which to their shadowy senses seemed a sound:
As when one instrument, to tell its tale
Of wondrous motions in a human spirit,
Sounds in an orchestra, and all the throng,
In solemn trance, like lively sculpture sit
With open eyes, and mark not what they see,
Or through its unapparent forms look out
Into the world from which these sounds are sent—
Or with closed orbs, but sight attentive still
And subtly present in the hearing sense,—

Then, like immediate thunder heard, at once
From the long calm of all the powers of sound,
That slumbered in the banded tubes of brass,
The sea of music breaks, with wave on wave,
Rolled high, and driven by the storm of soul
Forth poured in human breath;—like swimmers they
Amid the sounding billows sink and gasp;—
So on the voice of Abel when it ceased,
A thousand voices burst the gates of song,
And on a thousand and ten thousand souls
Of the redeemed, through all that region deep,
Poured like a wind upon the sea. The sound
Even to the Earth went up; from voice and hand
Rushed mingled song and strain, like fire and flame.
And heard again were Israel's solemn strings
And Judah's singers, and the alien harps
That on the willows hung by Ulai's banks,
Voiceless above the murmuring stream. And Thou,
Celestial Light! thy praises filled the ear,
Abysmal, of immeasurable night.
Sun of all stars, star of all heavens, Thou
Wast by their song adored—resplendent Word,
"Let there be light!"—and Thou, creative Hand,

That on its flying beams the image laid
Of all the flaming world; tremendous Power,
That gather'dst in thy wide-exploring grasp
The dark, diffused materials, and framed
The earth, and reared it; by thy mystic skill
Untaught, and force omnipotent, it rose
From gloomy waste, and bore the mountains up,
And hung their peaks in heaven;—Hand of might,
Wisdom, and mastery, that pour'dst the sea
Around the earth, the air around the sea,
And light round all; that weavedst the blue sky
Throughout the starry space, and held'st the entire
And rounded universe like an ornament
Before the infinite Reason's raptured Eye—
Thee glorious in day and night they hymned,
In hell and heaven; but Thou, of human spirit
And reason the light, redeemer of the soul
From darkness of worse night, eternal Word,
Begot without beginning, without end
Existing, thee, as the Messiah, sung,
As Saviour far more glorified. And break,
Thus rose the invocation of All Saints,
Break wide, bright Word, upon these sunless realms,

Prime fiat of creation, Word of power;
Light of all vision, glory of the light,
Lightning of glory! and on us whose eyes
Turn ever on the darkness a blind prayer,
On us, who, sunk below the living world,
See not earth, ocean, air, nor the vast wheel
Of heaven, swift-turning with all-circling flame—
On us, thou, milder than the lunar dawn!
Thou, brighter than the towering orb of day!
Sun of all suns and worlds, beyond the reach
Of night and earthly shadows, riding high
Above all heavens in eternal noon,
Descend—or to our eyes transmit thy beam.

Scarce yet the strain could from its echoes deep,
With fourfold repetition from all sides
Of the wide subterranean cavern beat
In higher concord implicate, be told,
When from above they heard a louder strain
Responsive; and immediate light afar,
As from the disk of an appearing sun
In their dark sphere, shone o'er them, and in gold
Clad all that stood thereunder, gloriously
Revealing the assembly on the mount.

The splendor on their upturned faces fell,
And shone in each, as when the morning beams,
From the high east, number the ocean sands.
Yet blinded not, so clear and soft it fell,
And like a cloud of light, athwart the deep
And painful gloom: And distant, in the midst,
Girt by an orb of seraphs—on the immense
Circumference hovering, each with pinions twain
Erect, twain prone, and twain that clasped the air,
And spreading sunny locks o'er-streamed with gold
From open heaven—stood a shape like man,
With bleeding hands and feet, but joyful mien;
Wan, but with recent triumph in his look,
And calm, as one with victory not elate:[3]
And through the central glory drawn transverse,
As if upon his shoulders borne whose death
Redeemed its shame, behold the accursed beam,
Intelligible to their wonder through the dream
Of Abel, soon confirmed. Not swift the sphere
Descended; like a hovering cloud it came,
Toward them compelled, as if descent, opposed
To its unprompted motion, and against
The upbuoyant strains from all sides blown beneath

By trumping angels, were more difficult
Than, from the instant impulse, to obey
The stress of harmony, and mount to heaven.
At length it rested, like a radiant crown,
On that sole awful peak, where sat apart
The Sire of men; who to their Saviour rose,
And for a space the First and Second Man
Confronted stood, each father, and each son;
The heavenly Father and his earthly Son,
The earthly Father and his Seed divine;
And Moses rose, his head unantlered now
Of the bright beams that made it dreadful, quenched
Before their brighter far; and from his hands,
Not passionate as once, with solemn act,
Cast down and brake the tables at his feet.
Then patriarch and prophet bowed at once,
Nor thought it shame that their large fronts sublime
Should touch the ground; and Abel bowed, and Eve
Clasping his feet, and all the multitude
Toward the transfigured mountain where he stood,
As on that Galilean hill beheld
In raiment clear, (yet rather, on this peak,
He glorified Calvary and the tree of shame,)

Throughout the utmost region, bowed the head,
Bending one way like plants before the wind.
And oh! hereafter, thou whom this dark strain
Scarce dares to mention, for the deeper awe
That sinks its numbers, may my soul indeed
Join in that worship that it renders now
With visionary effort, or, more blest,
With tears, behold thee, though afar, in heaven.

BOOK III.

BOOK III.

Back into Tartarus from that bright peak
Resting celestial feet, and made the immense
High pedestal of a god indeed, my muse
Compels the wing; intent to sing, and me,
Her earnest listener, teach the fiery war
Of those intractable despairing spirits,
Demoniac and human, blown into a heat
And sevenfold rage of fire, that made the hell
Which outward burned and flamed against the shore
Of their assaulted being, a septentrion sea
O'er-glassed with cold in winter's dark extreme.
  Now like as day, struck with the mortal dint
Of cold and gloom, when rises from the earth
Black night, floods out his glorious life, and stains
With flaming or and gules the argent field

Wherein, upon his sinking orb, he leans
In haggard splendor, and, athwart the world,
Throws back his mighty image on the east,
And makes it seem two suns or set or rise,—
So with a sicklied glory from the blaze
Of martial pomp the region shone,—appeared
Like these the hosts opposed, as far apart,
In radiant gold and brass and pallid steel,
Glimmering athwart the intervening gloom
In either side of hell; but not like these
They faded, leaving night: in order set
For battle, and in thought prepared as erst
In will, at once with caution armed and rage,
Their mutual motions and swift steps o'ercame
The interval of darkness deep with space,
Till now into each other's gleam they fell,
Contiguous; though from each other still
So far remote in space as from the east
To the west cape, that shut the Atlantic gulf;
Then swifter rushed to meet, and swift, behind,
Wide-following darkness like a storm came down.
And high above them, in the air disturbed
By moving armaments, grim lightnings broke

In wavering lines, and seamed the opaque far dark
With rivers of fire, and hairy meteors streamed
Along the immense, or in the skyless height
Wheeled, and around them with swift motion wrapped
Vast lengths of sounding flame; or bursting shone
Like shattered suns, and either army dazed
And far-illumined; nor beneath their feet
Less glowed the iron path, and frequent flamed
The smouldering base under their dread advance.
So many warrior-shapes then moved beneath
As never on the surface roused at peal
Of clarion, or in cadence beat the ground
To the loud hand of war upon the drum,
Or pale lips pressed upon the thrilling reed,
When moving nations armed flashed back the sun:
Nor had it been a field so full, or vast,
Though of all fields and battles were made one,
So thick the clime-bronzed race of demons swarmed,
So numerous the fairer flock of men;
The field so spacious that they trod, who not
For burning sea, or torrent rolling fire
Under its cloud-white veil, or vacuous gulf,
Or marsh of pale-spread flames, made turn or stay.

So on they came, revealing and revealed,
And imminent with light, in what it showed,
More dreadful than the deep accustomed gloom
That partially concealed them each from each.
Nor were they undismayed, but high-enraged
Above a doubt of the event, they strode
With undiminished steps the lessening space:
Black and precipitous battle on each brow
Hung threatening; and each eye with victory blazed,
And saw the foe already by their feet
Down-trodden. First, and far-seen, Baal loomed,
Swift-nearing, like the highest peak of lands
Half hid in mists, that moving seems to one
Whirled by it on the sea at morning-tide.
Asmod the right, and Ammon led the left,
The orient Jove though this usurped the name,
Nor less that Grecian god. To these opposed,
Towered adamantine Cain, both doomed and writ
Unconquered in his brow sedate and stern;
Naked as erst on earth, and yet than none
Less terrible, and armed with that dire plant,
Torn by the gnarled roots, whose stroke accursed
First burst the gates of war. Upon his right

Athenian Theseus marched, nor other seemed
Than when at Marathon his mighty shade
Paced giant-like before the patriot Greek s
Awe-thrilled and joyful, and his armèd foot
Broke through the Asian line. In look like Cain,
Alcides stalked upon the foremost left,
Thus naked and without armor, better armed
With strength and courage; the Nemean's hide
Thrown idly backward, showed his queller's hand
Laid on its knotty engine, with a mien
Lightly secure. On each part they appeared
As once in earth they did or ether; these
Like themselves,—those like the hero-gods,
They were or imitated there; but all,
Although in look still human and distinct,
Of spiritual stature, and with arms
Proportioned; like hill-crowning cedars waved
Their plumy helms, and, at each forward step,
Shook nodding ruin down and dark defeat.
The other side, supreme, as they who feel
Superior worth innate, or time-faced right,
Meet rebels, with superb presumption came,
And port omnipotent; by which dismayed

And awe-struck as it seemed, the adverse front,
When now so near the tread of each to each
Like echoes came, made halt, and through their lines,
Suddenly retrograde, disorder fell.

Then Baal, prompt to scoff, made hoarse the air
With triumphings like these: "Warriors in peace,
Peaceful in war! not overweeningly ye scorn
I see, and see in time for peace, wise thoughts
To entertain, though late; better resolved,
Doubt not, ye mockeries of our state, ye mimes
And shadows of our grandeur, pigmies swelled
And puffed beyond proportion—better willed
You seem in act to fly, than when, too bold,
You thought to meet the substance of your shade,
And try what strength might lie in real gods.
But thou, first parasite of hell, remain,
And fly not, as becomes their leader, first,—
That in the rear of rout this arm may reach
To drag thee by the false-crowned head reverse,
And strangle thy new godhead in my gripe."

Wide-eyed retort with lightning filled the face
Of Cain, but thunder from Alcides broke.
"Weak head and arm, but warlike frown and sound,

And gesture dread, thee, and thy vaunting mates,
What dumb hierophant could doubt divine,
Since ye sustain so many dire defeats,
And live, yet only know defeat? And this
To us you threat, whose fame has made the stars
Still shine in our renown, and tell our deeds
To mortal eyes—such deeds as fill not heaven
Without faint glory even in this pit,—
To me!—who never knew defeat or shame,
But mean to add a labor to my twelve,
And from thy impious mouth tear out that tongue,
Engine of blasphemy and faction still,
And to this leonine trophy add the fell
From thy brute-browed and far less godlike head."
Thus, pillared Hercules,—and Baal replied,
But more disturbed, as more like his own boast
The harsh refrain, shook like a tower, that sapped
By secret mine, though full of war and means
Against assault and siege, threats instant fall.
"Dismay of thieves and brutes! learn from a god
Defeat, honored too much should I say shame,
Who honor thee to chastise: but know, that loss
In such a warfare as we waged, I deem

More great and glorious, than such as thou
To quell with easy victory, as we shall."
He ended, and no time for further vaunt,
Or deeds, when lo—the cause of the delay:
On right and left, between the open ranks
Of footmen in deep files withdrawn, afar,
Through the dispersed smoke, chariots and horse,
In size and action to the gods they bore
Not disproportioned, nor unwieldy, showed
Tremendous through the gloom: of all-pure fire
Their subtle essence, into shapes like these
By orient or Argive warriors wrought,
At the quick hint of ancient use afield.
For spirit from the bonds of matter freed
Over the baser substance has more power,
To mould it into shapes diverse, and life
Infuse, impulse, and energy divine,
With swiftest operation of a thought.
Ere word might fill the pause, upon the foe,
For such encounter unprepared with like
Or other means, rushed down the ethereous steeds,
Winged, swift, far-bounding, thunder-hoofed, and each
With lightning maned; and from their nostrils wide,

Breathed pestilence and flame. Themselves in look
And motion irresistible, 'neath the flight
They ran of spears and javelins, thrown behind,
Innumerous, from the chariots, that from far
Rained wounds and wide confusion on the foe,
Dismayed and broken; and the gulfing wheels
Trenched their deep way through ranks on ranks o'er-
thrown,
While in the swarth of their armed axles fell
Whole groves of legionary spears, like reeds
Cut by the sickle, but more quickly strowed
That living meadow by swift reapers mowed,
And iron harvest—stunned. But not by all
Was the fierce onset unwithstood: and chief,
And full of strength and stature, Baal stood,
As when in some great deluge, bearing trees,
Ships from their anchors loosed, and fabric huge
From its foundation raised, with clinging life
Upon the wreck, and all the human wealth
Of promontories from the mainland torn—
Or in the steep flood of Vesuvius poured
Adown its vine-clad sides—some hill untouched,
With its green top and plumy forest stands,

With promise to the world of future life,
And safety possible to men :—So stood
The Toparch strong: On whom drove Tubal-Cain,
Thence Vulcan 'clept, whose hands, upon the forge,
First shaped the warlike soil to sword and spear,
And chariots framed, and bade the trumpet neigh,
And gave a tongue to war. But in the field,
Too late, the fear of his great baron smote
The armed mechanic: by one impulse swayed,
The conscious coursers swerved, and where the head,
From the strong spine, stooped o'er his guiding hand,
A blow from Baal's sequent blade, reversed,
And sheer descending, fell; and into wreck
Sunk his wheeled pomp, together fiery horse
And chariot into smoking ruins fade.

But him Alcides met, as through the field
He sought whatever had withstood the shock
Of hippogriff, and centaur, and armed wheel,
With courage still for conflict: whom, unarmed,
Fierce Baal thought, with one sure stroke, to cleave
Miserably twain: a moment his huge sword,
Uplifted, adding terror to its sway,
Hung like a bladed comet in the air;

Then fell, unmeasured, dreadful, from its poise
Thrown forward with resistless force and weight.
Back swift Alcides leaped, nor fled too soon;
His right foot stained the adamantine point,
That trenched the rock beneath, as where a stream
Breaks fissured way. Ere Baal from the blow
Retrieved his height, the hydra-quelling mace
Fell through the air, with horrible descent:
The stroke roared like a wind, and on his casque
Struck thunder, and his linkèd armor burst
From his huge trunk, as lightning from an oak
Breaks shattered rind and limbs; crushed acres groaned
At his decay, and o'er the din of war
High rose the iron rumor of his fall.
Nor did less tumult swell the late defeat
Of monstrous Dagon, from whom, worse deformed
With hippodame and kraken, self-assumed,
So spirits can, turned infantry and steed,
Nor chose the ambush of his doubtful shape.
On him Orion clear, came undismayed,
And as a dusky dragon, in close shade
Of horrible thicket, sees, from his deep lair,
With sleepy orbs amazed, a silver knight

Shine toward him like the sun, with like blind look
He saw Orion; who, while thus he stood,
And unresolved to fight as god or brute,
Upon his many shapes discharged a stroke
More ruinous, than when, rising from the ark,
Angered Jehovah, in the secret night
Of his dark house, the biformed Triton struck
Invisibly, and both his shapes deformed.

And they no better fared at human hands,
Who, vain of human empire, chose to seem
Their own invented fictions, in the wild
And wasteful riot of imagining mind,
By high, angelic genius poesied
In vedas and puranas, full of gods,
By accident or penance, raised to heavens
That on the blue Sumeru's summits lie,
Above the sun, in the unmoving light
Of Brahm;—but their romancers pined beneath,
In the immovable darkness, by no day
Alternated: Who yet, this day, would be
The awaking of their dream, the living gods
Of their stone idols, and together marched—
Bi-headed, many-membered, monstrous shapes;

That more by their complexity of parts
Encumbered than assisted, fell and writhed
Beneath the single, flashing hand that held
One sword, directed by a dual eye,
And by swift motion multiplied to meet
Their many-weaponed, idly striking hands;
Too late, in the dread imminence, to change
Back to angelic shape and wieldy limbs.
  Before all others terrible, advanced
Eight-handed Shiva, and, with insult stern,
Demanded Magog and great Madai old,[1]
Whose filial nations peopled the world's east,
That to their children's deities they, too,
Should worship render; but the answer felt
On his crushed brain, so swift—more lion-like
Than like dead stone—the fragment of a rock
Leaped from gray Madai's hand; unstayed,
Huge Shiva's head sunk on his rear-ward breast;
Then, one by one, relaxed his threatening arms,
Hand after hand its clanging weapon dropped,
And clutched the air, or sought with outstretched palms
To upstay his reeling trunk: Then Vishnu forth
Sprang warrior-like, and stood in guise and shape

More human, but, in stature, vast as when
To Shiva and to Brahma, claiming each
To be the oldest of the gods, he said—
" He that ascending shall behold my head,
Or that descending shall descry my feet,
Is oldest :" Weary years swift Brahma climbed,
And Shiva dived, but neither what he sought
Discovered, although Brahma's lie prevailed.
All stood amazed, by wonder more than fear
Disabled, and no champion to assail
The armed and living mountain dared a thought ;
Till Indian Dionysus, reckless, drove
His leaping chariot, whirled by tawny pards,
Toward the colossus ; and a javelin hurled
High in the air where seemed to be his head,
But vainly, and another at his breast
As vainly threw ; both through the phantasm passed
As through the air ; then at his feet—where stood,
Beneath the mighty umbrage, the true form—
A third, and suddenly the towering shape
Fell into shadowy ruin, as a cloud,
By lightning rent, bursts, and descends in rain.

But there the greatest imminence of the field
Hung doubtful, and the noon of battle stood,
Where Cain met Asrael.[2] He from heaven held
Commission still, executor of the word—
Fatal to all, in Adam—"Thou shalt die."
Task to fulfil by no damned angel sought,
But, eagerly, by him; less through desire
Of the carnivorous glut, than from the strange,
Inventive pleasure that he took to try
Each different means of death, and power in each,
And task the last capacity of pain:
To men invisible, yet by many names,
White Leprosy, and pined Consumption, known,
Hot Fever, and immedicable Plague.
But now, in his own shape, more ghastly stood
The mighty Ethiop: from his caverned head,
With hiding basilisks terrible, and browed
With night, down to his noiseless feet
Two sable wings fell wide; on which he sails,
Each day, o'er all earth's region, and which oft,
When he o'er some full capital, forewrit
For desolation, hovers with the Night,
Rain pestilence. And thus spake the fiend

Polluted most and deadliest of all powers
In earth or hell. "First rival, and my first,
But too reluctant victim,—who this hand
Preventedst of its right to the first death,
Thyself to feel it first; and found'st the charm
Sought of thy God against my dreaded power,
Less potent; seek'st thou again to prove
The miserable hour, the fear, the pain?
Or wouldst thou, for my victim not again
Fate yields thee, as thou deem'st, become my slave
By second conquest, and with torpid chain
Lie fever-bound in hell, or, at my choice,
Sit leprous at my feet, or ague-struck,
Unnerved, and palsied in my presence live?"

To whom hell's premier answered, with close brows:
"Sick-haunting raven, pleased with carnal taste
Of carcasses, and stench of monuments;
Queller of babes, fierce troubler of the old
Bed-rid humanity, night-dismal kite,
Earth's scavenger! dost thou thy service deck
With name of conquest?—for thy office erst
On me performed, of which thy boast is framed,
Take late requital now." Swift, at the word,

The felon plant that armed his hand, propulsed,
Swung circling to its aim: down Asrael sunk,
Like a hurt vulture, on his ample wings
Recumbent; but immediate rose—as she,
Sick with the peaceful prospect and pure air,
Aloft, springs from her rock against the wind
That brings the taint of death—and with that sword
Unseen, beneath whose wound the host
Of Sennachérib without battle fell,
Or in dark duel, touched triumphant Cain:
No wound, nor perforate nor trenched gash appeared,
Ichor or blood diffusing; pale he stood,
A breathing time, but breathless; forward then,
As when that tropic wind that comes unseen
In sea or sky, a tall mast, cordage-knit,
With all its drawing clouds, snaps short—it falls
Sea-ward, and circling half the sky—he fell,
Without a sound till fallen, and felt death
So as the spirit can, and as the parting soul
Perhaps may feel it, when with mortal pangs
Struck through the bodily sense, but not destroyed.
  But courage now, from the first shock o'erpast,
Encouraged more, to see the fall indign

Of one so potent, in the heavenly powers
Revived, with furious shame; and, by their foes
Taught horror, armed with flames they fought,
And fire opposed to fire: flash lighted flash,
And lightning against lightning streamed adverse,
And on their helmets blazed, and round their shields
Rolled in terrific circles. Each a Jove,
Ethereal-armed, seemed, fighting; and the crash
Of simulated thunder wanted not
From fall of heroes armed, and din of shields.
Earth shook, and universal silence roared
With sudden dissolution. Nor withstood
The fiery cavalry the assault of arms
Of their own substance forged; down sunk
The snorting team, or into formless flame
Their speed escaped: when lo—a stranger change!
Below heroic dignity debased,
Gods, by demoniac instincts and wild rage
Excited, leaving form and port divine,
Took shape of lion, pard, or serpent fanged,
As bold or treacherous nature prompted each
With horrible suggestion. On each side,
With shapes of heaven, and human features, mixed,

Huge tigers crouched, and glared, or the scared field
Circled with threatening yell and fiery spang;
And unicorn and centaur to the clang
Of trumpets neighed. But such a sight not long,
God, from his all-surveying height, might leave
In heavenly prospect. Suddenly a storm—
Blown periodic from the wastes of hell—
Fresh fuelled with the wrath of fire, came down,
Involved with thunderous roar and dismal shade.
Like mountain peaks above the mist, the flames,
Through pitchy clouds, rolled their advancing spires
To heights unmeasured, and the sulphurous air
Kindled with quick combustion: wide around,
Linked lightnings fell, and thunder denounced wreck
To all that stood before. Not sooner fall,
When, in the desert, 'gainst a caravan,
Of merchant-camels Bedouin horsemen ride,
If the fierce saymel redden the blind air,
Robber and spoil, than these, of men or gods
Embattled, first, and in most dreadful field,
Fell miserably, with all their useless arms
And puissance, defeated, at the breath
Of their great Arbiter, unmoved, in heaven.

BOOK IV.

BOOK IV.

Just then, as on the night that with veiled stars,
And brows with deeper folds of darkness bound,
Attended Christ's great burial, Titan-morn,
From out the east horizon's fiery gulf,
Upheaved his flaming orb,—just then, and near
Where, sunk below its farthest published beam,
Abaddon sat dethroned before his throne,
Amid the stern and darkness-deepening frown
Of mutinous gods,—the silent throng of saints,
Before the mountain-altar on which stood
Their sacrifice and Saviour, from the floor
Of paradise uprising, to the day
Of his refulgent look, unveiled their eyes—
Splendrous with unaccustomed light, and bathed
In the translucent dew from their great joy

Distilled, in unrepressed, calm tears, that each
Insphered a smile, as dew-born drops, a sun;
And made fresh flowers spring where'er they fell.
He, from his eminence, discerning all
His rescued flock, as, with the rising sun,
A shepherd, from his height, o'erlooks a field
White with his peaceful feudatories, smiled
Manifest love, which that far-banished realm
Than sapphire heaven more brightened; and these words
Spake,[1] far and near heard equally distinct.
"Loved and elect of Heaven, loved by me,
From everlasting, with fraternal love;
For whom I left the Godhead's high repose,
And clear and tranquil sway, and, in this form,
Have sought, and in this place—from earth
Descending, through the gate of death—
Meet you, with joy like yours; and greater joy
Preparing, shall soon lead you where with me,
They whose sole rest has been in sleep and death,
Shall rest from death in life, from sleep awake,
To rest in waking, where no night, nor sleep,
Falls on the eyes, nor dimness of the soul
Beclouds them, or from weariness or tears.

But first, I hither come to win the keys
Of heavenly access from the sovran foe,
And your accuser; yielded to his hand,
Till one of human kind shall wrest them thence:
Nor does he doubt, who put to test the strength
Of military heaven, and dared to cite
His thronèd liege to duel, these to keep
In his propriety, 'gainst a foe so weak.
Now, first, shall your dark janitor suspect
That not for his strict hate, and your fixed doom,
He holds that office, but for his defeat
And your advantage, in the distant scope
Of Heaven's purpose, that debars your right
To heavenly station with the pure unfallen
Deities, and yet creatures, (who, because
Created, use their gift of narrow thought
More to be just than merciful, and great
More than magnanimous,) until a man,
Never polluted, and with glory more
Than they adorned, and with the Father's love,
Lead up his erring race, and in their shape,
Before the bosom-seraphim, and great
Angelic elders, high above all place

Throned, and advanced at the right hand of Power,
Authenticate their title to a seat
Above their origin or merit; and pride,
Heaven's sole temptation, and through which alone
Angels are fallible, to worship turn
And meet humility. My coming long deferred
You deemed, and, in this banishment, complained
Yourselves Heaven's orphans, if indeed his sons.
I came not in the green and sunless time
Of patriarchal writ, the shepherd age,
When on the sparsely tented Asian fields
Still hung creation's early dawn and mist,
Lest legendary soon, forgot, or mixed
With fable, should become the act whose fame,
Though harsh to untuned ears the hymn of death,
Shall henceforth be the music of the world:
But on the plenary and highest noon
Of human wisdom, though at brightest dark,
I rose with light, and to the greatest height
Of man's ascent descended. Now begins,
Far stretching o'er all empire to the end,
My reign on earth: Jerusalem no more,
But all the earth is holy. Sion still

Bears on her hills a temple, fashioned high,
And full of glorious office, but devoid
His presence who from human lips loves truth
More than his praise; and soon her Holiest Place
Beneath the feet of nations shall be stamped,
And bruised with iron dint: To-day is laid
With deep and sure foundation in my death,
Soon, in my resurrection, to be raised
With heavenly superstructure fair, the new
Jerusalem; the undecaying pile
Of glory spiritual, whose most pure walls
Shall be the illimitable air, her gates
The East and West,—but Sion is no more."
At this, not spoken by their heavenly Guest
Without some touch of sorrow, not a few
Among the dwellers on that pallid shore,
Wept irrepressibly; and hoary heads
Desponded patiently upon the breast
Of king and prophet; and a sound was heard,
As of the golden strings of many a harp
Broken by hasty hands, and sighs were breathed,
And sobs tumultuous; as when a band
Of exiles, on a foreign coast, to hear

The ruin of their city, while for wrongs
And injuries they should smile, break out and weep.
But thus his interrupted speech pursued
The orator divine, seer self-inspired:
"The earth is mine, my empire over all
Imperial; and now to the defeat
Of hell, and of the last infernal hope,
I lead you forth; not for the unarmed aid
That ye can render, who, at rest, shall see
Victory from armies wrested, without arms.
And to this end, through recent quarrel, sprung
From the unnatural league of fiends and men,
Innumerous hell is gathering to one field
Her legions; and, in realms of heat and cold,
All the remotest lurkings of despair
Yield their dark tenants, in one confluent host
Assembled, to receive me with my saints.
He ceased, and to the earth once more they bowed,
Thanks giving and adoring: low, at once,
Bowed saint and airy minister: but one
There was who nearer clung, and at his feet
Bewildered wept; no citizen more old
Of this fair region than that hour, with Christ,

The only human shape besides, he came,
And proved so soon the promise, "Thou this day
Shalt be with me in paradise." Then all
The ethereous host, inspiring mighty breath,
For conceived anthemings of vaster tone,
With noise as of the calm sea thundering, stirred,
And sunk and rose in sounding depths and heights;
And to that dark profound, from highest heaven,
Their harps drew echoes; and the solemn crowd,
Beneath and distant, whitening hill and plain
Far stretched without horizon, hymning in
With apt and instant hallelujahs, poured
Doxology and thanksgiving, highest praise,
And glory highest; while, through all the air,
Upon the multitude around fell flowers,
By seen and unseen hovering angels showered,
Profusely, from their hands and loosened locks;
Fresh roses, lilies, and violets, like morn
With evening blended: as if flowery heaven
Had shaken down its blossoms to the wind,
And all its thick, ambrosial branches loosed
Their bloom and fragrance; or the under sky
Its stars had snowed down, noiseless, from the blue

Serene of night. That moment, where, beneath,
The dread, transfigured peak leaned from the verge
Of the ingulfed, unfathomable void,
A shadow fell along the airy steep,
And vanished, like a just appearing cloud
Below the horizon driven by the wind—
A shadow, but with lineaments and shape
Like human, that grew pale almost to air,
And cast a look behind, that had made dumb
Deep groaning pain, or hollow-shrieked despair;
For Judas knew his Lord, and stretched his arms,
With that last look, reverse to his descent,
And, headlong; disappeared in the deep gulf.

BOOK V.

BOOK V.

Withdrawn from that dire field, and far remote
Each from the other in the unbounded waste,
The hostile powers took counsel for their state
What farther, on each part, might be devised
To end the war, and in their vexed domain
Fix the disputed sceptre. And not long
The place to which the angelic tribes retired
To build again the wreck of war, remained
Without intelligent sound amidst the roar
Of elements dismayed, and guttural dash
And low-lisped threatenings of the sinking storm.
First, Baal lingered up, and cast around
A sullen eye, as if to seek a foe
Or challenge accusation; but none stirred.
Some sat with head bowed low, some lay supine
At monstrous length, and others, half reclined,

Looked up into the darkness with fixed eye.
But by their apathy not less enraged,
His fury dashed itself against despair,
In words like these: "Since none who shared with me
This late prodigious fortune, would impeach
My conduct of the war, or cares to hint
It otherwise had fallen had Satan led,
There haply needs not to enforce my words
The rebel-dared decadence of this hand.
Yet why of words speak I? at all why speak!
'Tis not the skill of words can cure these wounds,
Or heal the breach in our strong title up:
It lies not in the flowery epilogue
To an act barren of glory, or the pomp
Of eloquent declaim 'gainst earless fate,
To excuse dishonor, thus dishonored more,
And doubly shamed defeat, from foes so weak.
But this we all have proved long since, that fate,
Who to the strong gave courage, on the weak
Bestowed more cunning, and, for want of power
Found in themselves, the mastery o'er powers
Extrinsic: yet their artifice once known,
What more can it avail? But strength bestowed

Is a perpetual gift, if courage not deserts
The citadel of all power. Rise then, and arm!
Prevent their new devices, and perchance
Their triumph may prove prologue, in the end,
To worse disgrace, and be to our defeat
As when one lifts a foe above his head
To dash him from the height beneath his feet."

He spake; but none who bowed looked up, and they
Who flooded all the field with disarray,
And loose disordered arms, rose not, nor stirred.

Then to the moody senate, from his seat,
Composed, nor with defeat in look or mien,
Stood up mercurial Asmod the divine:
His argent shield, thrown back in peaceful guise,
Horizoned, round, his head and shoulders fair;
And on his ebon spear he leaned, with mien
That made it seem for this, not war designed.
And thus, unchecked by Baal's hostile eye,
He spake. "Much have I heard of late, oh friends,
Since the all-golden day of our estate
Gave place to this sad night, in which we dream,
With strange invention—heard and pondered much,
In the celestial argument of gods,

And imitative poesy of men,
Of destiny, necessity, and fate:
But only this have learned thus far, that fate
Is power, and power in us is fate, till met
With greater power, be it of strength, or skill
That makes strength instrumental. Both we find
Abundant in our foe, though of the first
Our leader but complains, with what just cause
Both to accuse ye know. Omniscient craft
I, least, can doubt in them, who me so oft,
Their instigator to device, have taught
Means to the end. The race, in motion warm,
Symposiac and amorous, yet forced
To rear their lives upon an iron soil,
And make their over-peopled rock yield life
Against its nature, every faculty
Of art apply, exhaust; and hither still
The warlike breed descend, and bring to these
Who arm against us each invention strange,
Each artifice and new implement of war—
Huge catapult, or enginery to raze
Walled cities at a blow, or overthrow
Whole armies, at safe distance, and secure.

What can avail blind force, though armed like Jove,
And limbed like Atlas, that bears up the world,
Against high stratagem, that turns its harm
Against itself, and binds it with the chain
Of its own rage, toils in its own attempt,
And makes its arms the armory whence it draws
Means for assault. Sooner shall we, here shut
Under the dark, unyielding doors of earth,
Storm the closed gates of heaven, and repossess
The seats imperial where our ruin sits,
Or, from this gulf of night ascending up,
Hang trophies on the pillars of the sun,
Than found a kingdom, here, upon the forced
Subjection of these less, yet more than gods.
Our utmost flight of hope must perch, this side
Success, on special victory, whose bruit
May clamor 'gainst the fame of this defeat.
But from what stratagem, since even here
Mere force is vain, as this sad field attests,
Shall hope commence? I know of none but this;
They through old instinct, though with choice of state,
Still keep their ancient shape, firm-knit to tread
The earth their limitation. Also we,

Though in this dungeon shut with human gnomes,
Agile and tall remain, with wings to soar,
Or dive, or sweep the air in circles, or extend
The equator, or the horizontal plane,
Or the deep pole. I counsel, then, to ascend
Into the darkness, bearing all our war,
And, coasting near the upper light and air,
Until arrived to where they sit secure,
In loose unharnessed ease, and pæans sing,
On them—whose wave of battle in this deep
Broke highest, and o'erwhelmed us—down descend
In cataract of main war. Which, if approved,
With instant speed perform: lest while we sit
And meditate the voyage, they prevent
Our purpose with the sudden clang of wings
Induced at like suggestion, and rain chains
And fiery missiles from the darkness down;
Or come trailing along the ground some damned
Invention, and strange implement, to throw
Huge fragments, crags, and flaming stones, and turn
Hell's bottom on our heads, who sit thus prone,
Disordered, unresolved, a host disarmed
With arms around, as if, without a foe,

By their own weapons fallen; so dismayed
And lost we seem, without all pride and shame,
Thus miserably escaped their first assault."
He ceased; and they approved his words as wise,
And fit to become deeds. Straight, from the heap
Of waste confusion Alpine statures tall
Gathered themselves upright, and plucked their arms,
And standards reared, redressed their shattered gear,
And in their threatening limbs, new-armed, their strength
And purpose felt, and poised themselves in air
On their long-idle wings; with not less stir
Than the black cranes in Lithuania's fens
When, from the austral winter overpast,
Rise all the stormy clans, and seek the north.

Meantime, the earth-descended powers convened
In martial diet; and—high-seated Cain
First worshipped with obeisance due—began
Colonial Cecrops, father of the West,
And founder of the famed Athenian pile:
With weighty brow, that frowned high enterprise

Above sagacious eyes that tempered fear,
He stood erect, and crowned with that sole star
Of Hesperus; and these his words, that fell
With sound of weight, that echoed ponderous thought.
"Not less, in this armed council, than the first
To exult, I glory in the event
Of this late trial with the elder powers
Of their celestial vaunt. Yet victory I know
Not certain conquest; and to overthrow
Not always subjugates; nor in one field
Is empire lost or won; nor can one day
Decide the next, when foes so potent join.
They who best know and prize themselves, least fear
To prize their enemies. To us their power
Is neither shame nor loss, to think them weak
No credit to our own; nor shames it strength
To seek for aid, that oft prevents its need:
Which, not delayed, I counsel for our cause,
Against the next encounter, sure to fall.
None here would use a thought to look for help
To mighty Aïdoneus where he sits
With Hecate forlorn. Nor, if unsought,
Perhaps for sullen ages may he rise

From his stern apathy: while these will wage
Eternal war; and as the blue-eyed race
Of Asar, daily, in their own demesne,
On bannered fields, with joyful peal of arms,
Contend in tournament and knightly joust,
Or downright battle soon repaired—so we,
Not with like gentle purpose and stern love,
But fierce unsated hate, the deadly rut
Of unrepairing rage, and pined revenge,
By slaughter unappeased, but fed by strife,
Shall meet a foe as strong and stern; and, each
Unconquerable, to each the endless strife
Shall be defeat. In numbers we exceed,
And this advantage will our party still,
With augmentation, keep; for every death
On earth above, save of the few who pass
To blest Elysium, is to us a birth:
While to their side, the kindred powers of heaven,
Unprocreant, immortal, and ordained
Infallible, yield not the numerous might
Of their addition. But we need not wait
The harvest of our race for multitude,
If not controlling, not to be controlled.

The sons of Cœlus and of Odin sit,
Titans and fierce Einherier, undisturbed,
Each in their toparchy ; and have not heard
The larum of loud war, or from the noise
Of elemental conflict in these gulfs
Distinguished it. I counsel that from these,
Ambassadors, on early foot, entreat
Availful aid. Besides the advantage sought,
'Twere to mankind much shame that our bad foes,
Who no relationship sustain or ties,
But of degree or rank, should make one cause,
And we, derived from the same loins, with one
Sole father, and one common spring
Of all our streams, not make one flood, one sea
Of confluent battle, and in one armed wave
Break on their leaguer, or main head of fight.
From Saturn, of the Titans youngest born,
So the Olympian parables unfold,
(Whom the pragmatic Judeans would fain
Demonstrate Noah,) sprang the race of gods.
Him vengeful Earth, we story, armed with steel
And saved from Uranus what time he thrust
His giant offspring from his sight beneath

The floor of day, but whom by Heaven himself
They celebrate preserved. From him, three sons
Shared all the earth we also said, and named
Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon. But the Greeks
To old Iäpetus[1] trace the human stream,
Brother of Saturn, whom these call his son;
From him Ioan, whence the Ionians spread
Westward; and from fair Gomer, eldest born
Of the same sire, the north derives its swarm,
That from the flowery south poured forth, to hive
In frost and cold; from him it takes its name
Cimmeria, thence the Cymri, and from him
The Rome-recoiling German; and his sons,
Guileless and simple, virtuous without lore,
And warlike without pomp, spread from the steep
Sides of hoar Caucasus to the region dark
That neighbors the sea-washed Atlantis vast,
And northward, at the entrance to these shades,
Shores on the cavernous pole. There oft, at night,
The solitary fisher hears upon his door
The hollow summons to his task, and finds
His boat deep-freighted, sinking to the edge
Of the dark flood, and voices hears, yet sees

No substance; but arrived where once again
His skiff floats free, hears friends to friends
Give lamentable welcome: the unseen
Shore resounds, and all the specious air
Weeps forth the names of father, brother, wife.
There the weak commonalty of mankind
Most haunt, reluctant exiles, who their fond
Abode choose regional to earth; the more
Heroic enter the immediate heart
Of most profound perdition, and divide,
In these interior depths, their full-swayed power,
Imperial, with the ancient thrones of night.
  But not the whole of our unhappy race
Make that dark journey: they who erred
Through Heaven's dark counsel, or by high constraint,
Just homicides, and violators bred
To violence, the rash incontinent,
And they who break injurious oaths, at death
Are wafted to deep-realmed Atlantis, o'er
The wide sea unwounded by a keel.
Immense and dark the land; all the remote
Wild region in one solemn shadow lies
Of green contiguous woods, with rivers spanned,

That in their arms wind half the earth, and hills
Dependent, and dividing the blue air,
From arctic to antarctic Cold: and here
Live the new race a timid, twilight life,
Oblivious and expiatory, spent
In feeble war or chase. But soon, (so shows
Our divination dark, a gift no more,
Itself informs us, to suborn the praise
And adoration, as to gods, of men,—
Once yielded to our oracles, on earth
For ever sealed; yet who can cease to feel
A human interest in our common race,
And their dark history, storied or foretold?)—
Soon shall this upper limbo, and in part
Elysium, dissolve; the older breed
Of actual men shall touch the farther shore
Of ocean, and the hybrid race shall fade
Like hyperborean flowers, that in the rear
Of winter spring, and at his bleak regress
Fall, sickled by the steely touch of frost.
West from the gulfèd pillars of the wide-
Victorious Hercules, swift equine ships
Shall ride the unfooted ocean-road, before

O'erpassed but by the chariot of the sun;
Or when his golden cup Alcmena's child
Employed for Erythea, and against
Old Ocean bent his bow, so fable tells.
These, one shall guide, whose greater deeds shall make
Mine, and the more vociferated fame
Of Jason—in the voyage that called gods
To venture, and pressed Theseus to the oar,
The Dioscuri, and the aged might
Of Hercules—an old-time tale, a faint,
Far-listened echo in the ears of men.
Him following, the sons of that stern race,
Here seated by themselves, but whose strong aid,
If I advise with wisdom, should be sought,
Shall there build up a world against the old,
And balance East and West, and wield far-swayed
But liberal empire, and themselves their king.

But what imports us more than such discourse,
Though what at other times best pleased to hear,
Is now to fortify our assaulted state
With league proposed to their great ancestry,
Already storied in deific runes,
And to our own and theirs, the Titan brood,

Antediluvian; and to this end,
Let speedy heralds to the north and east,
Their early-seized partitions of this realm,
Fly, winged with your commands." Here ceased the sound;
And the pleased diet on his proper hand
The peaceful wand imposed, and bade him seek
The Titans with soft words; the other charge
On fleet, aerial Perseus bestowed;
Then rose, and filled the dusky height with shape
And feature, and, for dawn of danger, roused
The hoarse, prophetic thunder of a camp.

BOOK VI.

BOOK VI.

To punish them, though damned, in whom the light
Of heavenly counsel scarce displaced the dark
Of human ignorance, the rod is slight,
The penalty not extreme. This, to their gain,
Found the gigantic children of the north
In the dim house of Hela entertained
More like death's guests than victims, though at best
With dreary cheer. Their empire, dark and wild,
But not from Pandemonium less remote
Than Paradise, in the uttermost bleak sides
Of that deep region, stands, replete with fear
And howling dangers, but unvexed by fire.
Here pallid heroes act again their deeds
Rehearsed in runes, and emulate the fame
Of the bright Asar,[1] and their state by bards
Imagined, in great Asgard, seat of gods,

Or frozen Utgard, territory wide
Of giants mountain-tall, and strong as winds.
Here Nastrond's snaky marsh, whose waves freeze black,
And thaw in blood, spreads under curdling mists;
Where base and coward lie, forever scared,
For punishment, with terrors ever new.
For the less monstrous, frowning Helheim stands,
Within whose icy halls the dead guests sit,
Unmoved, and mute through noiseless age on age.
But in more temperate air Vingolfa's bower
Shelters the tall blue-eyed, and flowers; both fair,
But without bloom; and Trudvang here in-walls
A space wide for a realm: as high up piled,
Valaskialf rises, roofed with blazing shields,
That spread a golden blush upon the clouds
Hovering on earth's near confines in the north,
And from beneath, like sinking Titan, light
A skiey arc above; so vast it towers
O'er deep Valhalla and its seated throng
Of godlike tenants: and the dome resounds
With fierce festivity and iron din.

Here, with the Asar and Asynior, sit
The Einherier, and Valkyrior virgin-eyed,

Who each her chosen warrior—wooed a-field—
Binds to her breast, with golden tresses wound,
And pure-lipped kisses, for the only love
Of glory, yields: The Berserker,[2] who scorn
Armor, and armed, contemning coward herds
Hid under shields, and crippling from afar
The fair athletic limb with treacherous dint
Of foreign substance, hardened wood or steel—
Crouch naked and apart, and tear their food
Untouched by fire, and drain the brimfull skulls
Of giants, while their insolent wild scorn
For Odin's self, and for the thunderer Thor,
The danger of his hammer scarce restrains.
Beneath the board huge wolves, like house dogs, slink,
Whose hunger glares, alike, on feast and guests;
And haunting ravens flit above, with song
Dissonant; or the dusky favorites perch,
And wing the foodfull hand imbrued with war.
Then rise the throng with frowns, who late like friends
Sat side by side, and spoke each other's praise,
And to the field rush stormful; where each day
The Valkyrior choose the brave, and to the rest
Leave widowhood. Yet oft to him that falls

Comes the impartial maid, as when at first
She marked his red cheek in the pallid field:
Who as he fell—stooping with arms dispread
Under her smiling locks of shadowy gold
Down from her checked, ethereal, snowy steed—
Beheld her, and forgot defeat and shame;
Nor heard the taunts of his too numerous foe
The dying warrior, on whom Glory's self,
Incarnate, seemed to smile, and bend her rays.

Now, on his broad-winged sandals, to this bourne
Of souls heroic, Perseus, from the bow
Of their great purpose sent who ruled his speed,
Came like an arrow; nor once paused in all
His spacious flight, till far pursued, as when
A ship from the equatorial—through half
The heavenly—circle, down the polar sky
Sails till she hits the impenetrable cold.
At length his swift feet stayed upon the edge
Of the steep gulf Gingungagap, that yawns
From shore to shore, as wide as that which laves
Swart Afric's forehead, and the pillared feet
Of Europe, her pale sister, on each hand.
No element, however, that which parts

Bleak Niffelheim from Muspelheim contained,[3]
For oared or wafted way, with transport large,
Like that which from old Carthage to the wall
Of Roman empire, and to Afric back,
Defeating and defeated nations bore;
But in its stead a void and dismal depth,
Whose dumb abyss afflicted more the ear
Than that when roars, with side-redoubled sound,
The inwashing sea 'gainst Calpe's windy stroke.
No other means of passage here appeared,
Than a faint rainbow, that, by what dim light
Strays hither from the earth, upon an arch
Of mist, foundationless, stands built, and spans
The dreadful space. Still he who boldly treads
Will find it firm, but with one fear he sinks
Into the steep vacuity, unstayed
By foot or grasping hand. Let him who knows
What glory is, bethink him if his feet
Have not o'erpassed this bridge, in Sagas called
Bifrost, that leads to the abode of gods.
O'er this, as on a solid arc of rock,
Or mortised timber firm, undaunted strode
The mighty courier; and before him found,

Upon the farther coast, a barrier huge
Of icy mountains, upon either side
Stretched like a sheer precipitous wall, whose top
Rose inaccessible to sight. But he
Like wind or flame, aloft, unbaffled, sprang;
And, like an eagle on a mountain's side,
Upright ascended, with ethereal step
Scaling the dizzy steep: availed him then
The wingèd gift compelled, for their one eye
And single tooth, from Ceto's hoary brood.

Now on the breathless peak he stood, and cast
On all sides round his armèd image down,
That from the icy cliffs gleamed out infract.
And far across a plain, and o'er wide seas,
And deep-sunk vales in which the glassy mist
Stood undistinguishable from lake or sea,
In the inferior horizon, he beheld
The top of huge Valaskialf and the tower
Of godlike Odin; that, far-off, appeared
A natural mountain, overshaped by art.
Soon on that side, precipitant, like a star,
Or meteor, he fell from peak to peak
Just touched with winged and scarce alighting feet,

And reached the level vale; through which so swift
Half ran, half flew the wing-dight, glorious child
Of golden Jove, the mist on the cold air
Blown from his nostrils—and that half concealed
His burnished armor, and the nymph's clear gift,
The sun-forged helm whose day-like beams could make
Invisible whoever wore it, at his will—
Behind him shone in the clear ether, stained
By his irradiant voyage, like the wake
Of a swift orient ship when it seems one
With that of the great sun, that sinks astern.

At length Valaskialf's gates and solemn porch
Stood wide and deep before him, only kept
By Cerberéan Fenris, who, too late,
Uproused his gaunt and monstrous corpse to bay
The foreign step. Before the snaky head
By the intruding Gorgophont displayed,
Fixed stood the stony glare in his wide eyes,
The huge portcullis of his craggy jaw
Stood open, and the warning howl, unheard,
Still swelled his rigid throat. So on he passed
And in Valhalla at the banquet stood
Unseen, beneath the wondrous helm, by eye

Of any god; who wondered not the less
At the fixed stare, and long, affrighted howl
Of spectral ban-wolf, and the ominous croak
Of wheeling ravens, with the instant scream
Of joyful vultures from their bannered perch
Along the wall. Then runic Bragur, moved
With frenzied portent, loosed his robes and hair,
And to his shrieking harp loud raved the song
Of Ragnarok,[4] oft heard in Odin's hall
With imitative din. Profuse of death
The rune, sung with a battle's sound, and shrill
With desolation, fit to please the ear
Of dreaming horror: and its theme the great
And final war in which all gods and men,
And beasts, and giants join; till in the end
The gloomy Surtur from the heart of night,
To their destruction by Alfader doomed,
Leaps, armed with flames, and burns the day's clear light,
And stars, and sun, and earth and heaven away.
Came to the fearful strain as fearful pause,
And, at the moment, the all-golden child
Of Danäe from his mystery flashed out

Upon their wonder; fair as Mars he towered,
Thus godlike tall, and terrible in arms.
Amazed the winking giants sat, and scarce
The clear sheen of his complete mail could bear,
And dazzling, sunny crest; each, meantime, drew
The breath through his stretched nostrils back
Into his breast, distended with affright;
Irresolute all, if they at once should fall
And worship, or strike dead the intruding guest:
Who spake—well guarded between sight and sound,
Bright apparition and smooth speech, to leave
No interval. "I come to lead you, gods,
To Ragnarok: no more the mimic war
Ye need to wage; now real danger sounds
To utterance of conflict, and the last
Occasion now of glorious strife, soon past,
Trumpets the universe to arms. The field
Awaits you where the Jötuns join their powers
Against our race, and Surtur sits aloof,
But doubt not shall avenge us, when the blow
Of God Alfader breaks the chain of fate."
At this, like magic scene, throughout the hall,
At once, the crowded banquet to a host

Of warriors turned. He from his side forth drew
His adamantine sword, a beam of day
Tempered in deepest night, and waved them forth:
And from the towered and ample port, whose height
They threatened with their stature, crowd on crowd,
In thousands on thousands, rolled, as from a bay
Returning, when, at once, the land wind blows
And tide makes out, the many-murmured sea
Gluts through a gulf, pressed by the storm behind.

A smoother way, though in attempt and aim
Of equal enterprise, the wandering chief
Of Saïs found, than tasked the bright and swift
Son of the golden rape; yet passed a wide,
Abrupt, and dismal interval of life
In man, or plant, or reptile, which itself
Had seemed fraternal in that total death,
And solitude without an eremite
To feel it solitary. On he fared
O'er plains like great Sahara, only marked
And measured by the sky, but more immense
And sea-like smooth and drear; and seas o'erpassed

Like that which rots without a breaking wave
Upon its desert shore, and spreads above
Ingulfed Pentapolis, but rolls not out,
Nor in, at all her gates; with patient feet
Ascended mountains self-revealed, whose tops
Burned, from their base, like stars at distant heights
In the immense of gloom; then under earth,
Through caverns within caverns wound his way
In close ravines, across the gloomy roar
Of subterranean waters, and deep gulfs
That yawned immeasurable; his only guide
Down these sunk mountains, and inverted heights,
The star that crowned his forehead, and inwove
His sable locks with gold, and flushed his eyes,
Replete with eager fire. At length emerged
Into an ample region in the main
And common cavern of that lower world,
He sees what distant seemed like hills, and rocks
That fragmentary lie, confusedly heaped
Where left by some great deluge or of sea
Or sliding earth, with thundering glaciers borne
From higher regions, and whose awful shapes
Hint of old worship, fabling to the eye

As if for sacrifice by giants piled.
Instant he lingered,—and breathed, half aloud,
The Titans! but none moved; some on the arm
Leaned far, with head depressed, or raised; some lay
Recumbent, and half buried, where the soil
Had grown around them and the frequent rain
Of fire and ashes strown the unmoving bulk,
Incrusted, that it almost seemed a mound
Grotesque with human shape. With noiseless awe
The ambassador advanced, as if to rouse
Them loth, though for that purpose sought;
And, nearer now, the bright surmounting star,
That lamped his wondering eyes and wary feet,
Bronzed with its light archaic, wondrous shapes,
Things fabulous-vast and rude, that nature seemed
Striving itself to art, in head or group
Of half formed sculpture struggling from the rock,
Or art Memnonian, to nature turned
In gradual process, broken and deformed
Under the noiseless hammer of strong Time:
These, near, with human shadows broke his gleam;
And others, in the distance, half revealed,
Lay undefined, like fragments of the night

With which the path of morning is forewrit.
None looked, or turned, or deigned to mark who came
With unaccustomed light; nor might his look
Have awed them into audience if seen,
Though, as he stood to gaze, his measure seemed
A cedar's shadow in the evening sun.
But soon thus proemed his Egyptian tongue:
"O wonder never raised by gods or men!
And see I then the more than men or gods,
Of that old world the citizens, here doomed
To this inert yet glorious rest of power
Deemed dangerous to Destiny itself?
The creatures of a greater time, and doom
Proportioned! less than your once selves, yet oh,
How greater than the greatest of our world!
I from the later born of our one race,
And common mother, Earth, have hither sped
Ambassador, in their need against the power
Of ruined—not ruling—gods, to seek your aid,
Sought now, rest sure, where Destiny not fears
Your, but for her, omnipotent avail."
At this Hyperion roused himself, and ope'd
His sunless eyes, assaying sight of whom

He thus bespoke. "Art thou from earth, O voice?
Then tell me if the sun still rolls through heaven:
An age, old with more ages, and I saw him not;
Nor his translucent ray has washed these orbs
With dewy light, and purged their thickening gloom:
And fear has much possessed me that he comes,
'Mid his long journey sunk in age or sleep,
From Ocean's doors no more, nor comes the moon,
That in his shadow walks, nor banded stars."

"I come not from the earth," the voice returned,
"Yet doubt not that her green demesne is still
The journey of the sun,—but from the heart
Of this Tartarean deep, where gods with men,
Or gods with gods more truly, wage once more
The ancient war: but weaker now the foe,
We stronger far; yet not too strong to ask
The aid of your great potency—for right.
We also for a fallen Saturn fight,
And his old cause, against revolted sons;
Whom, for more shame, he finds in his defeat
Unfaithful; though his first dethronement found,
With that Hesperian Saturn, no sweet isle
Beyond the ocean, where soft nymphs support

His hoary head, loosed from its golden load,
And bed him in their bosoms, in his ear
Whispering the while old tales that make him dream
Himself still master of the earth and air."

This heard Prometheus, where he lay supreme
Upon his rock, from which a tree, of those
Unsightly roots that rude and sparsely grow,
But never verdurous, in that clime, had forced
Its tough gnarled bole and split the stone;
As if from his indomitable life,
One nature in the rock and him, it grew,
Fed by the excess and bounty of his strength.
And thus he spake, but took no greater heed
Of any presence there, than if the voice
Had fallen from the air, or out of heaven.

"Who speaks of war to us! who have subdued
All strength in armies lodged, or single arm,
Omnipotence himself have dared, and chained
With his own chain—these bands that bind us fast;
And by existence here in this dark pit
And closet of the earth, still check his power,
Limit his infinite, and imprison Jove
In his imperial domain. To act—

Strong should he be who acts, or weak, advanced,
Or overthrown—is weakness, and shows need.
But he is strong who with Omnipotence
Or wills without constraint, or else defies,—
And I defy. Then let the eternal power
That knits the universe with his strength, and feels
It through, and wields it as one moves his limbs,
Hurl himself on me, I stir not this arm,
Yet in the end shall conquer: let him break
His aggregated thunders, storm on storm,
Through deafened ages, till he lose, at last,
The reckoning of his blows, it is to me
But one concussion, heard, not felt, or felt,
Unpained; for I am all one thought, one will,
And that is to defy." He spake, like one
Silent thenceforth, and all the Titans groaned
A stern response, as at the skiey fall
Of region-thunder neighbored mountains raise
A deep and sullen clamor, long prolonged.
  Yet the sage emissary to despair
Gave not his purpose, but inspired to act,
Unconscious whence the courage came or thought
For such adventure, instantly advanced

To the great atheist, and with his staff
Caducean, charmed, unlinked his chain, and freed
The sleeping force of sinewy neck and limb.
Awhile with the strange motion of free power,
Restored from so long lapse that it seemed given,
And passionate incipience of thought
As to what might proceed of that great gift,
Weak as the unbreathed yeanling of an hour
Fate's aged rebel and Jove's tyrant lay.
Then, as the sea retires and for a space
Leaves where he leaned upon the gulfy coast
His caverns void, and the emerged rocks in air,
Inflowing on his steps,—anon he roars
Up from the dangerous main against the high,
Percussed, resounding, limitary shore,—
So rose the Titan, and his struggling arms
Extended in the air, as if he sought
The power who on his impious strength had fixed
With unrelenting hand the band of law,
Indissolute, though a world grew old the while;
Meantime the ear of Hell ingulfed these words:
"O Jove! and do I feel thee yield at length,
And tempt me to be God? yet tempt in vain!

No! though the universe besides should feel
Unworth and misery, and for that cause
Be seized with instant longing to rush back
Into thy bosom, I remain, and I
Deny thy greatness, greater in myself.
Yet should it be of fate and not of thee
That I am loosed this chain, but for her power
Not worn; O thou, who hast with me so long
Parleyed in thunder, and with lightning fought
'Gainst the impregnable fort of my disdain,
Then shall I see if thou with change of place
Shalt conquer me, as I have thee o'erthrown,
Though with all gods, and earth, and heaven to aid."
Then old Iäpetus, of his stern son
Impatient, and his long inactive scorn,
Upheaved his gray paternal head and rose,
And cited their despair to answer hope
In words like these. "O brethren bound
In these afflictions, shall we wake, or sleep
For ever? rather should I not say die!
Here stretched until we turn again to earth,
Our mother, as they tell, to whose dark womb,
Meseems, we have returned to find our grave;

Or living, do but live as parts of her,
And she but live in us, as in these rocks.
Not without stern endeavor shall we climb
To heaven, and the stores of thunder reach,
That give us mastery, though, as ye have heard,
Our right at length sinks the fixed beam of fate.
Which way first opens, there success will prove
This change in fortune, or in time prevent
Our worse defeat: therefore this herald star,
Whose human, pleasing voice has filled the ear
Of dateless silence here with sound, whose theme
Is life and strength in arms, and vital stir
Beyond this tideless realm, all they will rise
And follow, who henceforth companion me."

He spake; and at the sound, as when that famed
And wondering traveller a great city saw
Turned into stone, and all the peopled streets
Made marble, nearer life than pillared groups
In sculptured Memphis or great Athens set,—
Noble and merchant, citizen and slave
Stand statue-like, with rigid hand, that grasps
The stiffened mane, the warrior, prompt to mount
A reined equestrian shapely rock, that shows

The stony foam in his wide nostrils, curved
By his long-parted breath, but uncollapsed,—
What time a disenchanting trumpet blows,
The warrior mounts, the steed with fiery hoof
Resilient starts, the crowd throng in and out,
And all the city thunders with the burst
Of instantaneous motion,—or if where
Great Arthur and his champions around
Sit on their dreaming steeds in warlike muse,
Sage Merlin's wand, unburied to restore
To British chivalry its strength and flower,
Should split their viewless prison, forth they start
With levelled spears, but find no giants now,
Themselves grown giants to their dwindled race,—
Like these, or those—weak figures both to express
Such magnitudes—up from their wearied couch
The ease-tired Titans rose; but with a sound
As when an earthquake, from the centre, tears
'Gainst its circumferent motion through the earth,
And for an instant checks its solid wheel;
That shakes down cities with the sudden pause.

BOOK VII.

BOOK VII.

O Spirit of sweet Song, and child of Heaven,
Miraculous Music! who upon thy string
Hast caught, and, more subliming, poured the noise
Of bursting thunder, and the ocean's wild,
Vast monotone, and the shriek of hovering winds;
And, of slight instrument dost with a touch
Give to our ears the sempiternal chime
Of heavens through heavens revolving, I full oft
Have heard thee and rejoiced. But thou, stern harp,
Æolian, golden, of heroic fame,
Through which the airy spirits of the dead
Move viewless, and for ever breathe like winds
The Manes of the great! for other sound,
Who, with profaner hand, shall tune thy strings,
Tense with the touch of Homer, and to fame
Revived, his haply listening heroes bid,

Though in a darker state, appear in arms?
Yet thou, deemed dead, immortal-young and fair,
Divine Calliope—where in some cave
By old Scamander, or the yellow wave
Of Tiber, sitting, hushed in marble trance
Of statue pale, or thy own shadow hid—
Shalt hear my early strain, and lest the attempt
Jar on thy golden dream, thyself with touch
Of many-memoried fingers aid the song.

Might creatures be called happy, the dark stream
Of whose existence from the only source
Of happiness is cut off, such might be deemed
The earth-sprung powers in hell's begun campaign,
Plumed with such desperate fortune, and their state
Of sullen passion into action changed,
And busy hope and fear; the tideless bay,
Their solitary port, that to the main
Of being heaved no wave, uproused once more,
And swelling with the self-same tides of power
And sympathy, that move both earth and heaven.
They all who toiled, or idled in the camp,
Drew from the fresh and glowing breeze of life
A seeming health, and to their aspect pale

Apparent bloom in cheek and lip, and fire
And sparkle in the eye. Some their new powers
Tried on the elements, to invent strange arms,
Missiles that on their object should beget
New weapons, wounding wide, or in the air
Burst horrible, and fall with showers of fire.
Yet here but little used, nigh useless made,
Where swifter means and motion stead, and weights
Thrown irresistible by a living arm.
Others defensive armor wrought, to fit
All movements, welted firm, and closed to search
Of tempered weapons, or the subtle wound
And venom of insinuating fire.
And beings now of female form appeared,
But haggard beauty, to their former selves
Such as the day-paled moon, by early men
Distinguished from a cloud: and still their eyes
Gave light to their wan beauties, and seemed stars
Wandered from heaven, or such as hear the knell
Of fading night, with twofold service loud,
Rung by the shrilly summoner of morn:
Nor did their womanhood make hell more fair,
Nor its harsh gloom might mitigate for man:

Their sole employ, before this warlike stir,
Seated apart, to mourn, and like unseen,
Transfigured Progne, grieve out all their night
With tales of treacherous love in life long past,
And go through all the story of the world,
And all their scorns and loves, here turned to hate
If lust, indifference if love. But now
Familiar war with pleasing dread subdued,
And glorious lure of famed heroic strength
Attracted these stern dames again to mix
With hated men. Nor did they want some sense
Of old association in their sex
With warlike feats on earth, by them admired,
For them achieved. Mycæna's rugged queen,
Frowned back by stern Ægisthus, turned
To Agamemnon, who turned not, nor met
Her eyes, but with his own, amidst the crowd,
Sought Iphigenia. Helen armed the pale
Priamides, to whom the presence there
Of great Achilles was more sad than hell.
Electra to Orestes half gave heed,
Half to Pylades, and the manly queen
Penthesilea on Achilles gazed,

And marked the hand that wounded, and the eye
That other wounds might make and heal: and midst,
Sat, in a hushed and unintruded space,
Eternal Homer, and his thousand-toned
Continuous harp, to that immortal tale
Of Troy subverted, and the adventured way
Of gray Ulysses, rung with sounds that awed
More than Dictæan thunder; and which drew
To that dim deep the all-illumined shape
Of glory down from heaven: Achilles smiled,
The Atridæ, and grand Ajax, his self-judge
And executioner, smiled each to see
His virtues and the faults, his virtue's best
And best loved flatterers, distinct alike,
In the just mirror of his Jove-like thought
Reflected; and more wondered to perceive
Himself made greater to himself, and deeds
Heroic, and armed fortitude admired
More in rehearsal than in conscious act.

Which to repeat, indeed, full soon they met
An unexpected summons. For the Northern powers,
Advanced far as to the aspect of armed men,
Reckless, and blinded to the swift affront

Of their bright leader, and remonstrance loud
To their mistaken fury, with unchecked,
Headlong proclivity to whatever seemed
To promise their sole joy, upon them fell,
Unsignalled, as a self-loosed weight of snow
Tears down some Alpine summit to the vale.
But like a torrent they, or like a sea,
Received it, and up-foamed, with wasteful roar
Swallowing its ingulfed wrath, and melted soon
The fractured and dissevered mass of power.

Perseus first himself, withstanding, met
The immediate onset, overborne by Thor,
And backward thrown upon his empty hands,
With head and feet bent under, and each link
Of his Hephestian armor rent from each;
That anvil for his stroke he seemed, whose sledge
Stayed not ascent with gain of gathered force;
But ere contrary hurled, it hung in poise,
While Thor glared up and down and saw but air,
So swift his foe escaped. But better matched,
Achilles of the sworded Odin stood
The fierce encounter. Yet they lingered both
Awhile, and gazed, and each admired and praised

The other for a god. So when a bull
That through the wild his vanquished kind pursues,
Or hunts the wide-mouthed bay of wounded dogs,
His hunters erst, by chance a lion sees,
With lowered horn he stares; the bestial king
Struck with his aspect, imitating, glares
With large recumbent head and glowing eyes,
His shaggy strength reposed upon his loins,
Thrown back and bent to spring. And soon uproused
The Achæan lion, but at distance first
Put forth his strength; and from his hand a spear
Sprang effortless, like lightning from the arm
Of alway-tranquil Jove—with aim as sure,—
But from the tempered barrier which the arm
Of Odin raised, glanced downward and struck through
Where joined the ankle his supporting foot;
Who forward fell, but with directed force
Threw all his height into one blow, heaved high,
And far descending, and the steely hand
Cleft from the wielding arm of Thetis' son,
Deemed woundless, but in vain baptized in Styx.
Amazed Achilles stood with doubt and pain,
While Odin to his Vulcan-mated feet

Restored his stature. But, soon reproduced,
The living from the severed member snatched
The fallen sword; and now his two-edged grasp
Each plies, nor in the dazzled space between
Leaves interval; and shrilling winds rush forth,
With momentary swiftness, from the sway
Of their immense, wide-sweeping falchions, oft
With dreadful shock colliding, and forced light,
That kissed the gloom at every touch of steel.
And what would be the end might almost seem
Doubtful to Fate, where each with so great fame
Stood forth, and ancient laurels now refreshed,
Or withered more and rent, and strength so great
As if the embodied West and glorious East
Full-armed, in single duel met, should try
Their past and future quarrel for the world.
But, on the instant, now above their heads
The darkness darkened more, and through the hosts
The tongues of wide-loosed fury ceased, at sounds
That ruined ruin, with the horrid stun
Of falling rocks, and swift projectiles hurled,
Resistless, from the height; so, ere the earth,
Their solid roof, unpillared by deep mines,

Down thunders, where, beneath the surface, delve
Gain's swarthy slaves—a shower of loosened ore
Foretells destruction: but still dreadlier fell
War's deadly forgery, spears and darts that rung
Like iron on iron shivered, where they struck
The adamant field, rebounding, or pierced through
Armor and armed, pinned to the fissured rock,
Inextricably, or where crushed between
Nether and upper flint, shield worse than wounds,
They lay afflicted with the dint that fell
Thick as falls hail, when, in the dropping year,
To rocky Sipylus bearded Winter climbs,
And marbles with his look the ceaseless tears
Of the invisible Niobe of the air.

As when a wind upon the sea descends,
And hurls himself along, and holds his foe
Beneath, who leaps against him in mad waves,
If rain pours down with thunder, they their strife
Both cease with mingled moan and dash, and flood
Drowns flood and wind—these in mid-tempest stood
Becalmed, and suffered storm. But impious Cain
From where he lay, with hands and feet transfixed,
Crucified on a rock, supine, thus loud

Blasphemed. "Jehovah, or whatever power,
Hidden in gloom, exhausts his store of ills—
Armed coward, great in accidents! who vaunts
Of goodness, and the original pretends
Himself of soul and spirit, with discourse
Of holiness and justice, but brute strength
Employs against us still; think not defeat
Follows assault though unresisted found.
Pile earth and heaven upon these fettered limbs,
And me to ruin, thy creation make
One ruin, and thyself thereon sit throned,
And I stretched under; I am still as far
Above thee, and my unimprisoned soul,
Untouched, and free from chains, on all sides space
Smiles out upon thee in disdain. In arms
Strong I believe thee: author of a strength
Greater than found in thee, the will and power
That in himself he finds to be unpraised
Yet just,—good, yet not hourly kneed and sung
By angels, nor reflected in their smiles,
Who, though thus crushed, can deem? or who believe
Thy nature could produce aught to oppose
And hate it, foreign to itself, and doomed

Therefore to punishment? Or, if thy pride
Must claim our origin,—as misbegot
Unnatural offspring, why not then destroy
Thy alien creatures, and the ill-tuned harp
New string, harmonious with perfect praise?
They nought so much desire; and to unmake
At least might prove thee maker, which till then
Whate'er thy power contingent, or by fate,
Or elder birth bestowed, and kept, once gained,
By cunning, and made sacred with the awe
Of forged religion, I shall dare to doubt;
Though with more waste of thunder urged and noise,
Thine ancient dialectics, or enforced
With arguments like these, so apt at hand,
And potent to convince those formed for pain."

To whom thus scoffing, from the gloom a voice
Responded in like vein: "Great Cain, our foe
And signal dread, but dangerous most to Heaven!
We own the honor great, and not unfelt,
To be mistaken for all-swaying Jove;
Nor does our power proved on thee warrant less,
Nor the deep pain thy speech betrays; but yet,
Sooth to confess, we only use, like Him,

The just prerogative of superior force
To afflict inferior natures, without grant
Of privilege to retort. Of old indeed,
We little thought, at variance ourselves,
His rebels to have punished, and much less
Reasoned his cause: which now I do to show
Thee imbecile in intellect, thy sole boast,
As body, though more obstinate in will,
'Tis granted, than are some; yet less by far
Than many a brute, whose ignorance, the cause
Of his low fortitude, had been also less
Perhaps, had he, like thee, for ages been
Academist in this unfettered school
Of intricate and dark theology.
Learn, sophist, that Jehovah's right obtains
Not from his being this or that, but is,
Because it seems, and has the power
To enforce what it pretends, and punish those
Its claim withstanding. Higher proof who needs?
Or what superior sanction could the fact
(Though proved) of our creation to his deeds
Afford? or what thy arrogated proof
Of genesis by our destruction shown?

Vain argument! for we ourselves unmake
Both what we neither make, nor yet restore.
Or what propounds the imprecated bolt
Annihilating—that but itself leaves nought—
To the annihilated, and of proof
Made unintelligent; or if restored,
After what lapse of time, yet who shall know
Whether by power extrinsic or innate?"
  Thus, to the atheist, the libertine,
Dark Asmod, subtlest litigant for ill
In the infernal forum; who his foe
Reviled, and with injurious defence,
Alike derided Heaven. But now in him,
And in the angel-host, and those oppressed
Beneath the advantage that their station gave,
Hearing took sudden captive tongue and hand
And every power, as all a coming sound
Discerned, yet distant, indescribable,
Nor to be told if it was tread or flight,
Or under ground, or both in earth and air;
As when an earthquake, on its march along
The Mediterranean shore, or o'er the sea
Submerged and sunk beneath its bottom, comes

By whirlwinds trumpeted. Nor did they doubt,
Who heard the sound, that, for these atheist scoffs,
God, as not seldom in their impious den,
Had bared his terrible and still lurking hand.

At once for flight, the ethereous army formed
Their hovering ranks, and on delayless wing
Sought a near mount; and on its farther side
Descending, perched, as on a leeward cliff
The ominous flocks of ocean wait the storm.

BOOK VIII.

BOOK VIII.

In earth above, on the celestial round
Open to heaven, and clad with air and wave,
And on that side of the great polar stream,
Where the bold Genoese touched the strand, till then
The virgin of the sea, a marble stands,
Whose shape by old Ilissus many a one
Might equal, none excel; a fresh antique,
Birth of the old world and the new, that shows
How Orpheus at the twilight doors of hell,
Fast by lulled Cerberus, with forward stoop
And hand above his patient brow, explored
The hushed and awful deep. And thus, arrived
To where he left of late his numerous league,
With standards fixed and warlike sheen and din,
To find it silent now and void and dim,
Gazed Cecrops: and the hindered Titans stood

Expecting when his voice should clear the cause
Of their delay. But nothing heard or saw
The infernal pilot, whom conjecture strange
Held dreamy mute, and fixed on leaden foot.
For them dispersed upon the battered field,
Like fear possessed of heavenly argument
Proved perilous to the disputant, as those
Who brought their mischief, and on pinions fled;
And for the passion of whatever ill
Moved toward them, like a storm-predicting host
In deep Sahara, these, from sight and sound
Self-buried, lie, and wait the dismal wave.

At length he spake; concealing what he feared,
That they through paler after-thought had fled,
Doubting the dread alliance which he brought,
Of equal power to injure as to aid.
"Or have they gone, for whom I broke your rest,
O sons of Uranus, impatient grown
To seek the foe, or by a greater power
Dispersed, without a vestige fled—oh thought
Too sad, though but conjecture, for a dream
Improbable!—I doubt; nor can surmise
Which—or what else befallen: but this I know,

That in this dreary void I left a host,
Like gods in strength, and men in multitude,
And, but by you, unmatched in earth or hell."
To whom attentive Cain made quick reply.
"Fled—even sight should not convict the eye
Of one who knows us, although welcomed back
To worse affliction, than thy absence sought
With vain-successful mission to avoid.
Nor yet by greater force you find us fallen,
But by mistake and guile, thanks to the prompt
And helpful malice of inveterate Heaven."
At this, all they who cowered beneath the storm,
Still felt, though past, of their angelic foe,
All to whom hope, undying, though shot through
With every star's malignancy, or pride,
Or curious inclination to behold
Their great allies, gave strength, uprose and stood;
Some towering straight and firm, some half upright;
And some from deep gulfs labored up, and gazed
On the large brood of Cœlus, whom their mate
Held with mute gesture and persuasive mien
Adroitly governed, yet, himself,—like him
Who yoked the lions, or who first bestrid

The snorting steed for battle, on the amazed
Confronted infantry seen moving swift,
And footless, like a god,—half awed, half proud.
  Gyes and Cottus loomed in sight, and huge
Briareus with a hundred folded hands,
Typhœus terrible with as many heads,
Each breathing storms, immense Enceladus,
Cœus and Creus, female Themis stern,
More feared than loved, and pale Mnemosyne;
And, from behind, Hyperion looked down,
Like his rebated orb, when half beneath,
And half above, he leans upon the earth,
And on the shadowy hills and forests bleak
That edge upon his light, and the great world
About to rise above him, frowning night
And cold against his beam, casts down, from far,
One wide, last look of majesty supreme.
  These to the eye of Cain familiar seemed,
And nearer to himself, though he with those
Of younger date, and less affined, stood leagued.
And now, erect, with hoary might redressed,
And like an earth-fast oak—that stronger seems,
Its twisted fibre bared, when sacred made

To vengeance by the unvictimed bolt of Heaven,
Than when its rooted strength and verdant tower
Turned the direct north wind—before them stood
Their Elder, and undoubted paramount.
But thoughtful most the seeming shame and loss
Of his confounded myrmidons to retrieve,
Soon, at his hest, a rousing trumpet broke
With melancholy clamor through the deep.
Nor might the chains of Erebus, nor the draught,
Lethean, of unmixed despair, nor fear
Of Heaven's thunder, nor superior force
In men, or gods, or elemental powers,
Retain them idle at that summons blown:
But, to the confines of the sight, the field
Uprose, throughout, and armied all the space;
Thus, when the swooping wind a pliant marsh
Of osiers bends along, its wings o'erpast,
They rise like one, and stand with whispering leaves.
Nor did the Titans less in these admire
Each splendid feature, burnished shield emblazed,
And silver-seeming limb, and pictured crest
With shading wings or plume, than they in those
Their monstrous breadth and stature, (for their bulk,

Whether on horizontal line it poised,
Or vertical, seemed hard to tell,) and strength
And aspect, as of things in nature, hills,
Or massy clouds in the horizon heaped,
And shaped by storms, were those, as these,
Endued with life and motion. But not thus
The bearded Asar, as they frowned apart,
Or without order started from their fall,
Saw the huge ancients; and the comers deemed
The Jötuns without doubt, spirits of fire
And aching frost, the native powers of hell;—
Part of their myth unrealized till now.

And soon perhaps the war had sprung anew
Between these loose allies, had not again
The airy plague, returning with worse shock,
Made manifest the common foe. But now
The assailants hovered lower, and more near
The flight of warriors to their quarry came,
Like vultures stooping on a conquered field.
And some, with bolder fury, on the cast
Of spear and javelin following, sword in hand,
Leaped down; but the main army kept the air;
And each strange foes, and stronger, finds to cope,

And not inferior, though beneath. Wide raged
Tisiphone and her fateful sisters, sprung
From parricide, or the monstered womb of Night.
Their living twine, they resting, to the ground
Hung sleeping; or, if seated, spread around;
But now a thousand serpents hissed the ear,
And from their eyes shot madness. Otus fought,
And Ephialtes, and the iron blows
Of Steropes and Brontes clashed in air.
The triple-hundred hands of Gyes leagued
With Cottus and Briareus, searched the gloom,
And dragged down wingèd squadrons, as the arts
Of fowlers in a snare surprise their prey.
And loud Typhœus, fierce, together drove
Whole armies whirled and crushed, or wide dispersed
With storms blown east and west, and north and south;
As when a tempest with the fluttering leaves
Of a stripped forest plays, and on the air
The scattered tresses of shorn Ceres strows.
But who, though frenzied with a strength like theirs,
And by heroic meditation stern
Trained like an athlete for the mighty theme,
Would dare to sing the strife where powers diverse,

Diversely armed, and numberless to thought,
Ranged, in one field, the depths and heights of hell;
To see, if sight might be, as from the peak
Of a jarred mountain one beholds the sea
Beneath, and storm above, and vapor mixed,
In the wild clouds, with light and glancing fire,
And all the sky involved with one wide wreck
Of solid earth, in whirlwind, with torn trees
And human fabric in the darkened air:
Or as if rather the essential powers
Of water, earth, air, fire, at once should meet,
In naked elemental force, to try
Which should destroy and reign; nor might it seem
Less greatly terrible when the four chief powers
Of hell encountered, in a war that left
No second battle theirs, but one full act
Of many made, and all the lingering plot
And circumstantial march of ruin marred
With the swift access of inbreaking death.
  But suddenly on the night, the element
Of tumult now, as once of silence, fell
A vast and spreading circle of clear light,
That from the side next paradise encroached

Upon the darkness, thickened more beyond;
And soon revealed the vexed and horrid space
With all its battle painted clear, and held
Distinct in its bright orb, in depth and height
And utmost bounds; as if celestial day
Had windowed their opaque dark roof, and purged
The atmospheric dross from all the clime;
And, on its edge, swept in vast demi-cirque,
The host of angels, unconcealed, it drove
Wide o'er their foes beneath; and far beyond
Alighting, they began retreat, by these
Close followed: with what cause for fear
Behold, and wonder—One of human shape,
In simple guise, unarmed, and o'er his head
A white and hovering dove! and far behind,
On all sides flocking to this emblem fair
As to a standard, legions wide-displayed,
And deep with multitude, the prospect closed;
But without spear or martial sign or sound,
Clad in the candid drapery of peace.
Yet were their garments clear not touched, nor feet
Pained by the burning soil; for, godlike, they
In moving walked not, but came gliding smooth,

Like stars adown the sky, or clouds along
The unimprinted air moved by the wind.
As from its shores, a shining river floats,
(Such things are told) unmingled through a pool,
So came the argent host; and from the van
Of glory, seeking darkness and the shades
Of deeper regions, all the dusky bands
Before them fled, like night before the morn.

Oh! that the voice were mine, and mine the ear
And visionary power of that inspired
First builder of a Christian song, whose speech
Prophetic, laboring things too high for verse,
Foretold the end of time—doomed at the sound
And dreadful confirmation by the hand
Of that eternal angel on the earth
And restless sea upborne—and all the scenes
Of glory and of darkness in the act
Of consummated earth, and heaven withdrawn
With awful pomp, and solemn trumpets blown,
Pouring alternate ecstasy and loud woe.
I too must sing of judgment: not thy theme,
Celestial seer, the mid-air throne and throng
Beneath, paining the eye with multitudes

From the discovered depths of earth and sea
Uprising to the world-dissolving trump,
And filling east and west and high and deep,—
But of the angels, fallen first, and so
Prejudged in him their head, and head no less
Of human faction: On whom now retired,
Before the unshadowed face of heaven expressed
In human lineaments, both friends and foes,
And monstrous things and shapes, a gloomy rout
From the extremest boundaries of pain.
Why done, or with what hope none knew; but him
They knew the greatest, and to where he sat,
Still like their god, though bowed, and by despair
Self-turned to stone, cast up an awful look
Of doubt and supplication. He his eyes
Fixed on the spectacle, like one long blind,
Who stares, suspectful of some dread approach;
Then half uprose, and thrice again made feint
Of rising, ere the strength in his pale limbs
His stubborn heart diffused to bear him up:
But stood, at length, with air supreme o'er fear,
A shape of heaven, or with such look and mien
As God himself, who now in human form

He dared confront, had rather been arrayed,
Shaped to the eye of heroes, when they prayed
To Jove the arbiter. Soon, through the ranks,
Opening in vista wide and deep, he moved
To meet the bright invasion. Armed he came,
Plutonian, measureless, and dread as night;
Whose king indeed he seemed, and fit to reign
Over all powers; and wide around he cast
A darkness at his coming, as a storm
That from the ridge of some bleak mountain torn
With all its clouds, moves down in earth and sky
To overwhelm the sun. But when his strides
Had measured half the space—with what design
Who knows but He who gave him power thus far?—
He faltered, and with haughty steps reversed,
Before the calm severity of mien
And feature in his opposite, retired;
But lingered so, and sought against the shame
Of his retreat to hold himself upstayed,
Each backward step impressed the bedded flint
Whereon he set his strength and sought to stand;
Till at the gates of the dark fort which held
The keys of heavenly access, and of that pit

Sole egress, their appointed keeper paused.
Immense they stood, shut by almighty power,
And barred secure against less force and skill
In human or infernal siege applied.
And here, at bay, the great apostate turned
Full on his enemy, and frowned despair;
And roused his strength, and to his soul, sublime
With sense of single greatness, while his host
Stood imbecile, up-summoned for this hour
The thoughts of all that he had been in heaven,
Or hoped or claimed on earth, or held in hell.
With steady front advanced the shining siege;
The unarmed army onward, and converged,
Came, glorious with numbers: but alone
Moved their eternal leader, and from far
His aspect shone with unremitted beam
Direct on Satan: He his dusky shield—
That heretofore, thrown back, his gloomy head
Around, and on his mighty shoulders lay
Like the horizon on the earth at eve—
Cast forward, drooping his huge spear, inclined,
But not full-levelled. All the host of saints
Stood still, and fatal sympathy first moved

A murmur in his own, with slumberous stir
As of awaking war: but onward and more near
Came the celestial Man; when once again
He moved, and with a forward step shook hell.
But at the instant, as with lightning struck,
Though none perceived the stroke, with arms upthrown,
Self-hurled, on the disputed gates he fell,
And ruined down their strength; nor fell alone,
But all his host the silent thunder felt,
And smote, with wide and simultaneous roar
Of armored limbs, the adamantine floor.

But other noise soon rung, and from the saints
Hosannah, and hosannah! sweet and loud,
In that deep cavern, from the echoing air
Sunk far beneath the roots of earth, as sung
By warbling seraphs in the top of heaven.

Now as the golden wheel of day that climbs
The precipice of the world, on that side whence
He shines at morning—brightening, as he comes,
Forests and craggy heights and seas and fields—
To early eyes, throws high into the air,
Opaque, or formless void, his welcome light,
And shapes the dark with splendid fantasy,

While hovering glories stoop upon his beam,
And crimson clouds troop in the bannered east;
So in the gloomy steeps and utmost height,
Zenith, and all sides round, of teeming hell,
Angels on cloudy wings hung looking down;
Or in the radiance hovered; or, on high,
In peopled vistas opening into heaven,
With bosom-seraphim, transcendent shapes,
And awful cherubim, before unseen
In earth or heaven, stood creation's grand
And glittering guardians, not revealed till now,
Lest deemed allies at need; and gazed, while Christ
And all the armies beatific passed,
In bright defile, o'er Satan, where he lay
Along the heap that thundered in his fall,
Supine, with upward face: But not o'erclimbed
By men thus easily, without wings to stead,
Had been the prostrate fiend. Then rose they all
Into the air, and swift the plumy throng,
Encircling, held them in their bright caress.
And in the midst, the cloud which that old fane
Made glorious with apparition of a form
Of human aspect, by awed priests beheld,

Received its body now; and like one cloud
Together rose the whole; while from the air
A voice fell on the ear of each beneath,
But seemed in Satan's, sole to him addressed—
"The Foe is judged." And still their eyes they turned,
And still their looks hung on the rising host,
Till seen like a receding sun, and then,
In the blank height of darkness, like a star;
And then the darkness covered all, but still
They looked into its depths, nor stirred nor spake.

NOTES.

NOTES.

BOOK I.

1.— . . . *sat Aïdoneus discrowned.*

The propriety of giving Satan, as king of Hades, the classical name of Aïdoneus, needs only to be suggested.

2.— . . . *that his pride may play at Jove.*

There is perhaps no occasion for explaining why those who represent in Hades the ethnic deities, sometimes give the Supreme Being the name of Jove.

3.— . . . . . *but in the west*
The elect infernal queen, . . .

Astarte or Ashtaroth, the Diana of the Phenicians, and thus identified with the Persephone of the Greeks.

BOOK II.

1.—*In the same world of demons and damned men.*

It may not be thought superfluous, perhaps, to explain why Paradise and the place to which custom gives and limits the name of Hell, are made regions of the same place.

"The word Hades, which occurs eleven times in the New Testament, and is very frequently used in the Septuagint translation of the Old, never signifies in Scripture the place of torment, but always the place appropriated for the common reception of departed souls. There is no single word in our language that has this signification. Homer, Hesiod, Plato, and other Greek writers, distinguish Hades from Tartarus, which was the place of punishment for the wicked."—*Tomline's Exposition of the Third Article.*

"Our *English*, or rather *Saxon* word, *hell*, in its original signification (though it is now understood in a more limited sense), exactly answers to the Greek word Hades, and denotes a concealed or unseen place; and this sense of the word is still retained in the *eastern*, and especially in the *western* counties of *England*; to *hell* over a thing is to cover it."—*Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon; word* Ἅδης.

"By *Hell* may be meant the invisible place to which departed souls are carried after death; for though the Greek word so rendered does now commonly stand for the place of the damned, and has for many ages been so understood, yet, at the time of writing the New Testament, it was among Greek authors used

indifferently for the place of all departed souls, whether good or bad; and by it were meant the invisible regions where those spirits were lodged. * * * * That the regions of the blessed were known then to the Jews by the name of *Paradise*, as hell was known by the name of *Gehenna*, is very clear from Christ's last words, 'to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"—*Burnet on the Third Article.*

That our Lord gives the weight of his authority to the Jewish opinion that Paradise and Gehenna were in the same region of space—the place of all departed souls, supposed by them to be the under-world—is proved by the parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which a soul in torment and one of the blessed are made to converse with each other across a gulf.

2.— . . . . . *of earthly saints*
Born ere their Saviour—till that Saviour's power
Should break its shadowy door and set them free—
The sad Elysium. . . . .

"Inferiora [Eph. IV. 9] autem terræ infernus accipitur, ad quem Dominus noster Salvatorque descendit, ut Sanctorum animas, quæ ibi tenebantur inclusæ, secum ad cœlos Victor abduceret."—*St. Jerome.*

"Nihil aliud teneatis nisi quod vera fides per catholicam ecclesiam docet; quia descendens ad inferos Dominus illos solummodo ab inferni claustris eripuit, quos viventes in carne per suam gratiam in fide et bona operatione servavit."—*Gregory the Great.*

"The end for which the soul of Christ descended into hell was

not to deliver any damned souls, or to translate them from the torments of hell unto the joys of heaven. The next consideration is, whether by virtue of his descent, the souls of those which before believed in him, the patriarchs, the prophets, and all the people of God, were delivered from that place and state in which they were before; and whether Christ descended into hell to that end, and that he might translate them into a place far more glorious and happy. This hath been in the latter ages of the Church the common opinion of most men, and that as if it followed necessarily from the denial of the former: He delivered not the souls of the damned, therefore he delivered the souls of them which believed, and of them alone; till at last the schools have followed it so fully that they deliver it as a point of faith and infallible certainty, that the soul of Christ, descending into hell, did deliver from thence all the souls of the saints which were in the bosom of Abraham, and did confer upon them actual and essential beatitude, which before they enjoyed not. And this they lay upon two grounds: first, That the souls of saints departed saw not God; and secondly, That Christ by his death opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven."—*Pearson on the Creed.*

3.—*A shape like man; . . .*

"As Christ died for us and was buried, so also it is to be believed that he went down into hell."—*Article* III.

"That Christ descended into hell is not expressly asserted by any of the Evangelists; but they all relate that he expired upon the cross, and that after three days he again appeared alive; and therefore it may be inferred that in the intermediate time his

soul went into the *common receptacle of departed souls.*"—*Tomline on the Third Article.*

"Several places of Scripture have been produced by the ancients as delivering this truth; of which some, without question, prove it not; but there are those which have always been thought of greatest validity to confirm this article. First, that of St. Paul to the Ephesians seems to come to very near the words themselves, and to express the same almost in terms: 'Now that he ascended, what is it but that he first descended into *the lower parts of the earth?*' This many of the ancient Fathers understood of the descent into hell as placed in the lower parts of the earth; and this exposition must be confessed so probable, that there can be no argument to disprove it. * * * *

"The next place of Scripture brought to confirm the descent is not so near in words, but thought to signify the end of that descent, and that part of his humanity by which he descended. For Christ, saith St. Peter, 'was put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.' Where the *Spirit* seems to be the *soul of Christ*, and the *spirits in prison*, the *souls of them that were in hell*, or in some place at least separated from the joys of heaven; whither, because we never read our Saviour went at any other time, we may conceive he went in spirit there, when his soul departed from his body on the cross. This did our Church first deliver as the proof and illustration of the descent, [*see note* 1, *to Book IV.*] and the ancient Fathers did apply the same in like manner to the proof of this article. * * * * The third, but principal text, is that of David, applied by St. Peter: 'For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand that I should not be

moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' Thus the Apostle repeated the words of the Psalmist (xvi. 8–10) and then applied them; he 'being a prophet, and seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.' (Acts xi. 25, &c.) Now, from this place the Article is clearly and infallibly deduced thus: If the soul of Christ were not left in hell at his resurrection, then his soul was in hell before his resurrection; but it was not there before his death; therefore, upon or after his death, and before his resurrection, the soul of Christ descended into hell; and consequently, the Creed doth truly deliver, that *Christ* being *crucified*, was *dead*, *buried*, and *descended into hell*. For as his flesh did not see corruption (by virtue of that promise and prophetical expression), and yet it was in the grave, the place of corruption, where it rested in hope until his resurrection; so his soul, which was not left in hell (by virtue of the like promise or prediction), was in that hell where it was not left, until the time that it was to be united to the body, for the performing of the resurrection. We must therefore confess from hence, that the soul of *Christ* was in *hell:* And no Christian can deny it, saith St. Augustin:

" 'Quis ergo nisi infidelis negaverit fuisse apud inferos Christum?' "—*Pearson on the Creed.*

"Seeing it is a most certain truth that our Saviour's soul did immediately go into the place appointed to receive happy souls after their recession from the body, and resignation into God's hands; if we take hell in a general and common sense for the place or the state of souls departed; and descending for passing

thereinto (by a falling, as it were, from life, or by going away together with the descent of the body; and thence styled descending; what appeareth visibly happening to the body being accommodated unto the soul); if, I say, we do thus interpret our Saviour's descent into hell for his soul's going into the common receptacle and mansion of souls, we shall, so doing, be sure not to substantially mistake."—*Barrow*, Ser. XXVIII.

BOOK III.

1.—*Magog and great Madai old.*

I have somewhere met with the opinion, sustained by plausible reasoning, that the descendants of Magog, the son of Japheth, peopled northern and eastern Asia. That Madai's descendants moved toward the east, is evidenced by what seems to be a relic of the name in Media and the Medes.

2.—*Azrael.*

The angel of death, in the superstition of the East.

BOOK IV.

1.— . . . . . *and these words*
Spake, ...

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison."—*St. Peter.*

——"The body of Christ lay in his grave until his resurrection; but his spirit, which he gave up, was with the spirits which were detained in prison, or in hell, and preached unto them as the place in St. Peter testifieth."—*The Third Article, as first published in the reign of Edward VI.*

"But in them [the words of St. Peter], taken in their most literal and obvious meaning, we find not only a distinct assertion of the fact, that 'Christ descended into hell' in his disembodied spirit, but, moreover, a declaration of the business upon which he went thither, or in which, at least, his soul was employed while it was there. 'Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which were sometime disobedient.' The interpretation of the whole passage turns upon the expression, 'spirits in prison;' the sense of which I shall first, therefore, endeavor to ascertain, as the key to the meaning of the whole. It is hardly necessary to mention, that the 'spirits' here can signify no other spirits than the souls of men; for we read not of any preaching of Christ to any other race of beings than mankind. The assertion of the Apostle, therefore, is this—that Christ went and preached to the souls of men in prison. The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is, nevertheless, in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world—a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, more than in enjoyment. It is a place into which the souls of men never would have entered had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who have once entered. The deliverance of the saints from it is to be

effected by our Lord's power. It is described in the old Latin language as a place inclosed within an impassable fence; and in the poetical parts of Scripture it is represented as secured by gates of brass, which our Lord is to batter down; and barricadoed with huge massive iron bars, which he is to cut in sunder. As a place of confinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in the text of the Apostle, imports not of necessity so much as this, but merely a place of safe-keeping. For so this passage might be rendered with great exactness: 'He went and preached to the spirits in safe-keeping.' * * * * The souls in custody, to whom our Saviour went in his disembodied soul and preached, were those who were sometime disobedient. The expression 'sometime were,' or 'one while had been disobedient,' implies that they were recovered, however, from that disobedience, and, before their death, had been brought to repentance and faith in a Redeemer to come. To such souls he went and preached. But what did he preach to departed souls? and what could be the end of his preaching? * * * * If he went to proclaim to them (and to proclaim or publish is the true sense of the words 'to preach') the glad tidings that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, in the merit of his own blood, this was a preaching fit to be addressed to departed souls, * * * * and this, it may be presumed, was the end of his preaching."—*Bishop Horsely.*

BOOK VI.

1.—*From old Iäpetus.*

"The sons of Japheth (Iäpetus); Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan (Iöan), and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras."—*Gen.* x. 2.

2.—*And from fair Gomer.*

From Gomer, Gomeria, or Cimmeria, and probably Germania—a derivation that will seem forced only to those unaccustomed to trace the etymology of national and local names.

BOOK VI.

1.— . . . *there, with the Asar and Asynior, sit*
The Einherier and Valkyrior.

The Asar (Asiatics) were the Gods, or, rather, a divine race of men. The Asynior were the females of the race. The Einherier were human heroes, raised by their bravery to sit in the Valhalla with the Gods. The Valkyrior were the warlike Houries of the Northern Paradise.

2.—*The Berserker, who scorn armor and arms.*

"The champions of the north were called Berserker, in the old tongue, from *ber*, bare, and *sekr*, a garment; because they

wore no armor in battle. They are described by almost all the northern writers as men of extraordinary stature and force, subject to sudden and violent attacks of passion, under the influence of which their fury was ungovernable, and as formidable to their natural friends as to their enemies."—*Herbert. Horæ Scandicæ, Note to Helga.*

3.—*Bleak Niffelheim from Muspelheim.*

Niffelheim, the region of cold; Muspelheim, of heat.

4.— . . . . . *the Song*
Of Ragnarok . . . .

The twilight of the Gods. For this specimen of genuine Norse frenzy, see *Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons.*

BOOK VIII.

1.—*The Jötuns.* . . . .

The dark, hostile powers of Nature, they figured to themselves as Jötuns, Giants—huge shaggy beings, of a demoniac character. Frost, Fire, Sea, Tempest—these are the Jötuns.—*Carlyle.*

THE END.

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